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ABSTRACT

To determine how federal assistance and regulation affect the programs and operation of the educational system at the school and district level, this study concentrates on the cumulative effects of a number of categorical programs and related civil rights mandates. The focus of the 8-state study was on 20 school districts, from which 56 elementary and 25 secondary schools were selected. Onsite interviews with approximately 900 school and district respondents formed the primary data source, supplemented by information from documents and telephone interviews. Areas examined were target students' access to services that are considered appropriate; organizational and administrative features of schools and school districts; and local decision-making. General conclusions reached were that federal and state policies for special populations have substantially improved and expanded services for the intended target students; these policies have increased the structural complexity of schools and districts; and programs settle in more comfortably over time. (MLF)

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CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICIES ON SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

January 1983

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PREFACE

The report is written for an audience somewhat familiar with federal aid to education since 1965. Chapter I states the purpose and focus of the study and describes the methods we used in a brief, non-technical way. Chapter II describes the variation in schools, districts, and states that comprise our study sample. It also includes profiles of a few schools and districts to convey a fuller sense of the local settings in which cumulative effects occur.

Chapters III-V are the core of the report; they present our major findings about effects on instructional services in the schools (III), on the organization and administration of schools and districts (IV), and on local decisionmaking (V). Each of these chapters concludes with a summary of its major findings.

Chapter VI, Summary and Conclusions, reviews all the findings, organized by the issue areas described in Chapter I, and draws from them overall conclusions and policy implications. A reader who wants a brief, general summary of our findings and conclusions may want to turn immediately to Chapter VI.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although not all project staff members were involved in preparing this final report, it reflects their efforts and analytic insights as much as those of the authors. Harold Winslow, Christine Finnan, Christine Padilla, and Ellen Renneker visited sites, prepared individual case reports, and participated in the cross-site debriefing process. Dorothy Stewart and Margaret Needels also took responsibility for on-site interviewing and preparation of case reports. We are very grateful for the contributions of all project team members, without whom this study would not have been possible.

We would like to thank the many school and district personnel we interviewed, who gave so generously of their time to help us understand the impact of federal and state policies on their local education systems. We are equally indebted to the chief state school officers and their staffs in the sample states, who facilitated our access to study sites and our understanding of the state context. A list of school districts that participated in our study follows the acknowledgments.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Mark Kutner of the School Finance Project (SFP), our project officer, who kept the faith and guided the progress of the study in a flexible and helpful way. Joel Sherman, Associate Director of the School Finance Project, also deserves mention for his support, interest, and critical review of our work at various stages in its development.

In preparing this report, we were aided greatly by individuals who reviewed the draft and gave us the benefit of their comments. In addition to SFP staff, we wish to acknowledge Richard Elmore, University of Washington; Arthur Jefferson, Detroit Public Schools; Michael Kirst, Stanford University; Gary Sykes, National Institute of Education; Bayla White, Office of Management and Budget. Several of the reviewers also guided us in earlier stages of the study. They and others advised us on study design and methods or reviewed early versions of our findings based on their varied experiences, thus playing an important validating role. Eleanor Farrar, James Guthrie, Paul Hill, and Lee Sproull were particularly helpful, as well, when study plans were being formulated.

We are especially grateful to those at SRI who supported us through the project and through many drafts of this report. Jacquelyn Brown was project secretary and deserves a medal for her efforts in our behalf. Shirley Hentzell edited this report and did much to improve it. We also thank Linda Burr and Marion Collins for their invaluable assistance at many moments of crisis.

Finally, we acknowledge the interest and support of individuals and their organizations who participated on the study's advisory board: Joel Berke and Mary Moore, Educational Policy Research Institute of the Educational Testing Service; Linda Brown, Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights; Mike Casserly, Council of Great City Schools; Anita Epstein, National Association of State Boards of Education; David Florio, American Educational Research Association; Ed Keller, National Association of Elementary School Principals; William Pierce, Council of Chief State School Officers; Marlene Provizer, League of Women Voters; John Purcell, National School Boards Association; Joe Schere, American Association of School Administrators; Robert Snyder, National Education Association; Scott Thomson, National Association of Secondary School Principals; Jim Ward, American Federation of Teachers.

Study Sites

Fresno Unified School District	Fresno, California
Pittsburg Unified School District	Pittsburg, California
Brevard County School District	Rocklidge, Florida
Hillsborough County School District	Tampa, Florida
Taylor County School District	Perry, Florida
Caddo Parish School District	Shreveport, Louisiana
Cameron Parish School District	Cameron, Louisiana
East Baton Rouge Parish School District	Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Clinton School District	Clinton, Massachusetts
Springfield School District	Springfield, Massachusetts
Watertown School District	Watertown, Massachusetts
St. Joseph School District	St. Joseph, Missouri
University City School District	University City, Missouri
Pojoaque Valley Schools	Pojoaque, New Mexico
Santa Fe City Schools	Santa Fe, New Mexico
Columbus City Schools	Columbus, Ohio
Plymouth Local School District	Plymouth, Ohio
Warren City School District	Warren, Ohio
Carbon County School District #1	Rawlins, Wyoming
Natrona County School District #1	Casper, Wyoming

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I INTRODUCTION*

Purpose of Study

Federal education initiatives, developed separately over more than 15 years, have resulted in a patchwork of legislation, financial and regulatory policies, and judicial decisions. Although a substantial body of research exists that investigates individual initiatives, few studies have looked at the combined effects of the full array of programs and mandates. SRI's study was designed to investigate the cumulative effects of this collection of federal (and related state) policies at the district and school level. It focuses on categorical aid targeted to student populations with special educational needs (e.g., programs for the handicapped, disadvantaged, and limited-English-speaking) and on the laws designed to ensure the civil rights of otherwise unequally treated groups (e.g., legal provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, race, disabling condition). Collectively, these initiatives constitute the major role that the federal government played in education from 1965 to 1980: an attempt to reduce the effects of poverty and discrimination and promote equal access to public education.

The study is one of several supported by the School Finance Project (SFP), a research effort mandated by Congress in 1978** during a period of policy interest in school finance reform for equality of educational opportunity. To understand the effects of federal financial assistance,

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* The principal author of this chapter is Marian S. Stearns, SRI International.

** P.L. 95-561 (Section 1203), The Education Amendments of 1978.

SFP recognized the need to assess what federal funds buy. Project staff wanted to determine how federal assistance and regulation affect the programs and operation of the educational system at the local level.*

In particular, we investigated the influences of:

- Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (now Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981), which provides financial support for services to educationally deprived children residing in areas with high concentrations of low-income families.
- P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which provides partial support for special education and related services targeted to handicapped children, as well as mandating services for all such children.
- ESEA Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which provides financial assistance to school districts in support of programs for children of limited English proficiency (LEP).
- The 1968 amendments to the Vocational Education Act (VEA) which established set-aside programs requiring that 10% of the VEA allocation for local programs be used to support services to handicapped students and that 20% be used for disadvantaged students.
- Civil Rights Laws--Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973--which prohibit discrimination against staff and students in federally assisted programs on the basis of race/national origin, sex, and handicapping condition, respectively.

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[*] Two other field-based studies funded under the School Finance Project are (1) a study of the interactions between federal and state education policies related to special needs students conducted by the Education Policy Research Institute of the Educational Testing Service, and (2) a study of state-supported programs for special needs groups, conducted by Decision Resources, Inc.

Though more peripherally, we also included three other laws that target resources to categories of special-needs student: the IndoChinese Refugee Assistance Act, the Indian Education Act, and the Emergency School Aid Assistance Act (ESAA).* (These were implemented in only a few of the study sites.) Finally, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, which subsumes and amends Title I, ESEA, and which combines ESAA and a host of smaller categorical programs into a block grant distributed to all districts was not in effect at the time of our fieldwork. Local personnel were anticipating its implementation, however, and we have reported their responses to it where pertinent to our findings.

Our research thus focused on targeted categorical programs and civil rights mandates, rather than discretionary programs aimed at promoting innovation, institutional development, etc., although we have indicated what we learned about the latter where relevant.

These laws are complemented in varying degrees by similar laws at the state level (many of which were stimulated by federal programs) that bring additional resources and requirements to bear on instruction for targeted student populations. Together, these federal and state policies provide local educational institutions with a wide array of resources and, at the same time, impose numerous constraints on the use of these resources (and on the use of local resources as well).

The SRI study was designed to assess the collective impact of these laws on instructional practices and arrangements within elementary and secondary schools and on associated policies and activities in local educational agencies (LEAs). We sought to understand, from the local perspective, what difference these policies made to the school and to the district as they accumulated over time, interacting with each other and with local programs. Ultimately, we were seeking to understand, in broad qualitative terms, the "costs," "benefits," and associated tradeoffs of the federal programs and mandates, as local educators perceived them.

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* ESAA, in fact, provided resources to districts to help meet special needs arising from desegregation, including direct students services but also institutional needs, such as staff development.

Focus of Investigation

Prominent concerns and related research about federal programs directed us toward particular kinds of effects. From these, we derived a set of research topics, organized around three spheres of activity at the local level that might be significantly influenced by federal initiatives: instruction (at the school level), organization and administration (at school and LEA levels), and decision-making (at school and LEA levels).

We briefly review below six areas of concern about the effects of federal programs, then discuss the particular topics that guided our research.

Public Concerns and Related Research

Educators, policy makers, and the research community have raised various issues about the local effects of targeted categorical aid and service mandates since the inception of these policies. In recent years, concern has coalesced in six issue areas:

- Target students' access to appropriate instruction
- Coordination vs. fragmentation of instruction
- Impact on the regular classroom and core instructional program
- The use of systematic approaches to instructional management
- Administrative burdens
- Effects on local decisionmaking and discretion.

Numerous criticisms have been leveled at the structure of categorical programs and mandates, accompanied by calls for diverse reforms--including elimination of federal education laws, consolidation and deregulation of programs, or the transformation of categorical programs into undifferentiated block grants. At the outset of the study, the research base was inadequate and often equivocal. We took it as our chance to develop a broad base of information, which explored the asserted "negative" and "positive" influences of federal programs, in an attempt to resolve or clarify many of the issues raised.

We review the six principal areas of concern below, along with selected research and commentary.* Our choice of studies emphasizes those that have looked explicitly at some aspect of collective or cumulative effect, although numerous studies of single programs raise similar issues.

Target Students' Access to Appropriate Instruction. Regarding target students, commentary suggested both positive and negative consequences of federal programs and mandates. There was a widespread perception that access of particular target groups to more appropriate instruction had substantially increased in response to government funding and mandates. Studies of individual programs had underscored this perception (e.g., NIE, 1978, regarding disadvantaged students; Wright et al., 1981, regarding handicapped students). At the same time concerns were raised about whether the students eligible for more than one special program were receiving duplicate services. Studies of this "overlap" issue (e.g., Birman, 1981) suggested an opposite pattern: that limitation of services to the multiply eligible predominated, while there was relatively little duplication.

Coordination vs. Fragmentation of Instruction. The overall instructional program of elementary target students was said to be "fragmented" due to participation in one or more programs on a "pull-out" basis (Turnbull et al., 1981). Some analysts suggested that this fragmentation was exacerbated by the increased number of federal and state categorical programs (Kimbrough and Hill, 1981). Others attributed fragmentation less to federal programs and more to local causes embedded in the structure and operation of most schools (Moore et al., 1981).

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* The reader is referred to a more extensive treatment of related literature in Knapp et al., 1982.

Paralleling (and in some respects causing) the instructional fragmentation discussed above, a "fragmentation" of administration was noted by some observers. Critics claimed that this fragmentation manifested itself at the school level in strained interstaff relations or the inability to coordinate special services with the core instructional program; some exploratory research indicated that this was indeed the case, at least under certain conditions (Kimbrough and Hill, 1981), while others noted that over time more stable and well-coordinated arrangements seem to emerge (Rabe and Peterson, 1981). A parallel fragmentation was said to be likely at school district level, where multiple categorical programs, each with strict accounting provisions, necessitate separate administrative arrangements (Meyer, 1979).

Impact on the Regular Classroom and Core Instructional Program. Regarding effects on instruction received by nontarget students, there was less research, but considerable commentary, most of it negative. The most widely held view was that the presence of categorical programs in schools detracted from the core program by interrupting classroom instruction as students came and went to "pull-out" classes or were mainstreamed (Kimbrough and Hill, 1981), by taking up the classroom teachers' time with noninstructional matters, or by excessively routinizing the activity of classroom teachers (Darling-Hammond and Wise, 1981). Yet there seemed to be a possibility of beneficial effects for nontarget students, such as the social benefits derived from desegregation or mainstreaming (e.g., Johnson and Johnson, 1981, regarding mainstreaming) or the improvement of classroom climate when target students were given instruction elsewhere.

Systematic Approaches to Instructional Management. Many observers suggested that procedures for planning instruction, assessing needs, and evaluating programs had become more systematic and formalized, and perhaps overly so. Special education procedures, for example, such as the individualized educational program (IEP), had drawn sharp criticism as unwieldy and overly elaborate (Atkin, 1980), although many observers credited the IEP and related assessment processes with facilitating more sophisticated identification and placement (AMS, 1980). Some research pointed out that, despite improvement in identification, imprecise standards and weak enforcement of them could lead to misclassification, e.g., over-referral of black students to classes for the educable mentally retarded (Moore et al., 1981). An argument was forcefully made, but with little data to support the assertion, that similar procedures promulgated by various government programs helped make teachers more "rationalistic" and destroyed an "essential spontaneity" in the teaching process (Wise, 1979; Darling-Hammond and Wise, 1981). One step removed from instruction, other researchers had looked for evidence that the required federal program evaluations were used by local authorities, but had found little local utilization (e.g., David, 1981).

Administrative Burden. Negative consequences were asserted to flow from the numerous requirements that imposed excessive "administrative burdens" on local staff. The chorus of practitioners' complaints about federal paperwork was familiar and widespread. Research suggested that the administrative costs of categorical programs were substantial but was equivocal about who bore the brunt (GAO, 1980), although it was clear that both categorical and regular staff took a share (Hannaway, 1980). One study, for example, noted the increasing demands on school principals' time, but did not clearly establish the degree to which categorical programs contributed (Hill et al, 1980). Various studies addressed the issue of the way staff--especially classroom staff--directed their time and attention under the influence of categorical requirements (e.g., Littlejohn, 1978, regarding special education requirements), and it was often said that staff had less time for the core instructional program as a result.

Local Decisionmaking. Regarding local discretion, it was a common perception that government programs had, in effect, "tied local people's hands" through the myriad of program requirements and service mandates. This claim was often raised in the context of discussions of grants consolidation and or block grant proposals, which were advanced as a way of simplifying the controls placed on the local level by the federal government, thereby enhancing the flexibility of lower levels of government (ACIR, 1981). Local discretion could also be infringed upon less directly, through requirements empowering parents and other local advocates, who might deprive educators of some degree of authority over local programs or intensify local competition for resources (Hill, 1979). Paradoxically, an opposite effect was also asserted, sometimes by the same people who complained about constraints on local discretion: Because of the many intervening levels in the intergovernmental system, requirements were said to miss their mark by the time they reached the service delivery level (ACIR, 1981). Some analysts traced these weaknesses to one of two causes: local agencies used federal dollars for their own purposes or substituted federal dollars for local funds that would otherwise be devoted to federal purposes (Barro, 1978). A decade of implementation research had also reinforced the notion that federal influence over local activity is weak, and often influenced local efforts in unintended ways (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Williams, 1980). From a regulatory perspective, government controls often appeared ineffective as a result.

Research Topics

The foregoing concerns about federal mandates and categorical aid required us to investigate three spheres of school and school district activity: instruction, organization and administration, and decisionmaking.

For our field research and analysis regarding instruction, we concentrated on issues of access (who received what kind of instruction), appropriateness (how well the instructional program matched the learners' needs), coordination (how the various components of a student's instructional program were or were not integrated with one another), and spillover (how nonparticipants gained or lost from the presence of specialized programs in a school or district).

Regarding organization and administration, we explored at both the school and district level issues of staffing and structure (the kinds of people, positions and consequences for organizational arrangements), interstaff relations (how specialized and core staff--or organizational units--related to one another), instructional management approaches (how instructional programs were planned and evaluated, and what relationship these approaches bore to student or institutional needs), and associated demands on the time of particular key staff.

Regarding decisionmaking and discretion, we concentrated on issues of compliance (how the government program rules were transmitted, understood, and implemented), power relations within the district (who gained or lost influence as a result of federal initiatives), and relationships between the district and external constituencies (what role parents or local advocacy groups played in decisionmaking).

Conceptual Framework

In order to study these topics, we needed (1) a definition of "cumulative effects", and (2) an explanatory model that:

- Connected federal causes (policy actions at the "top" of the intergovernmental system) with local effects (school and district responses to policy action at the "base" of the system).
- Identified the areas of local activity most likely to be influenced by federal action.
- Displayed the various kinds of contextual factors that help to explain observed effects at the local level.

Cumulative Effects

We defined "cumulative effects" as the responses LEAs and schools have made to the array of federal and state targeted categorical programs and related mandates that affect them. Although such responses may be of many kinds, we concentrated on those bearing on educational services: for example, resource allocation decisions or eligibility policy at the LEA level, and staff time allocation or instructional arrangements for target groups at the school level. Some of these responses are easily traceable to a specific source of funds or set of government regulations; many are more indirectly related. Almost all are effects stemming from multiple causes, which include forces in the local and societal context in addition to government initiatives.

These effects or responses are "cumulative" across several dimensions: time, levels of government, and programs. The cumulative impact over time is reflected in current practices, which are the result of a 15-year history of growth in government resources and regulation. The passage of time has also permitted people in districts and schools to develop routines that accommodate government initiatives in various ways. Across levels of government, federal programs and policies have inspired, in varying degrees, a complementary array of programs and policies at the state educational agency (SEA) level; in turn, LEAs have reinterpreted this combined array to schools, often adding resources or restrictions in the process. Each level of government displays the cumulative effects of higher-level action, and these contribute to further cumulative effects at lower levels.

Effects accumulate across programs in additive and interactive ways. The presence of more than one categorical program may add to the resources of the school district, the services available to students, and the types of staff present in the school building; multiple programs may also add to paperwork or to the number of advisory meetings a principal must attend. In this sense, the cumulative effects of multiple programs and mandates are like those of individual programs but differ from them in degree.

Interactive effects may take place as well. One program's purposes or requirements can conflict with another's, leading to local confusion and inaction. The lack of funds for one mandate can mean that the resources of another program are diverted to cover both; however, the presence of one program may also enhance the chance that another's goals will be achieved.

We were interested in all these dimensions of cumulative effect as they manifest themselves at the local level. The accumulated influence of federal programs and policies on state-level initiatives was not a primary focus, except as a source of explanation for what schools and LEAs do. From the local perspective, federal and state programs and policies present a combined array of resources, constraints, and expectations to which local people and institutions respond.

This definition focused our attention on the "big picture," which meant that we were unable to study the fine detail of particular policies. We were not doing an in-depth study of any particular law or policy; rather, we were concerned with larger patterns of effect attributable to the sum total of programs and mandates operating over time.

Explanatory Model

We present below conceptual models of the two local settings in which federal education policies have cumulative effects: the school, and the school district or LEA.

At the base of the system is the school. A schematic diagram of the conceptual model for the school is shown in Figure 1. Its instructional programs serve students with and without special learning needs. The core instructional program is given to all students (except those with the most severe learning problems, whose "core" program is entirely specialized and separate). Special instructional services of various kinds are available to students with identified learning needs. Federal policies are most likely to influence the identification of the target group(s), the staffing and

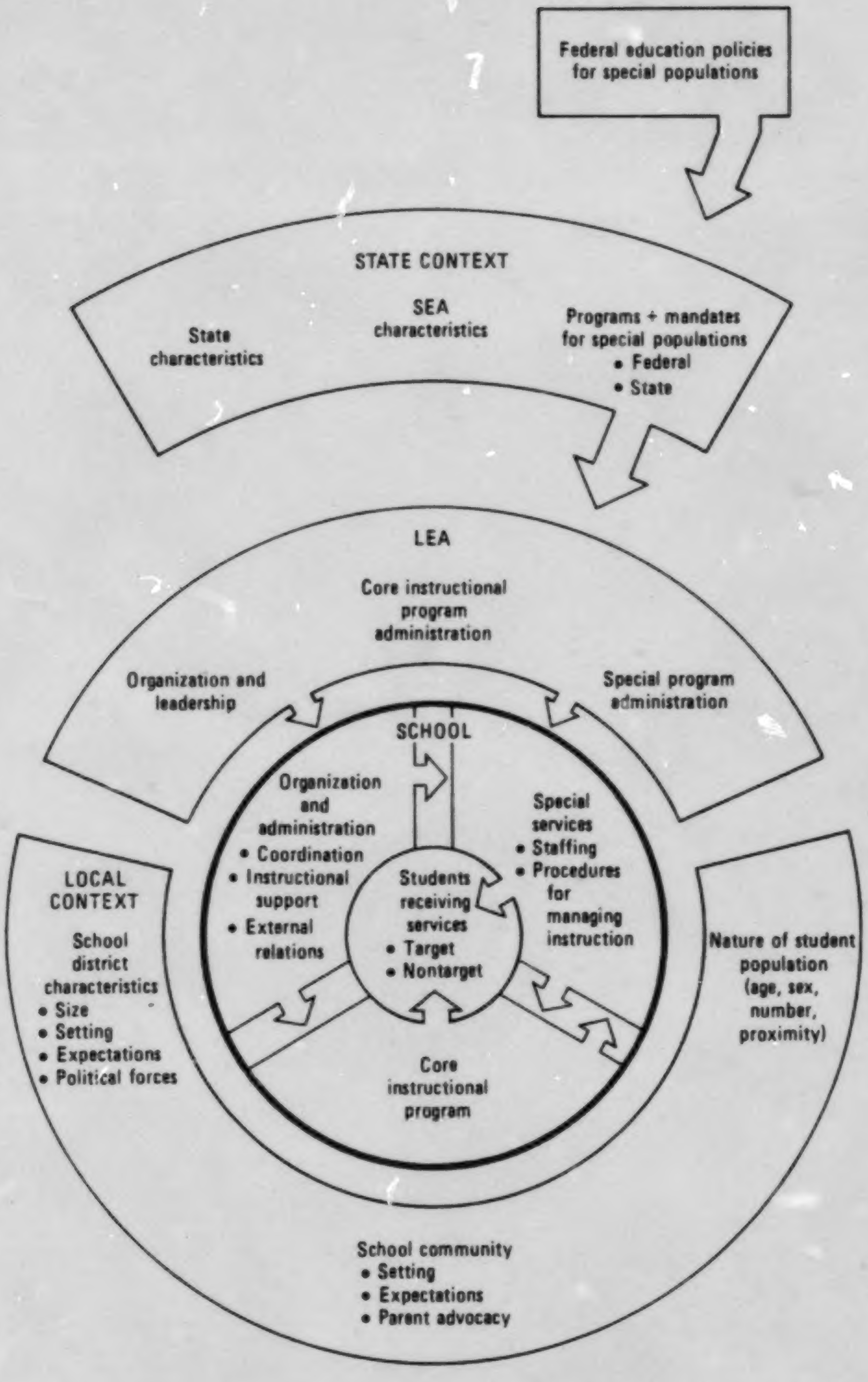
Federal education policies for special populations
STATE CONTEXT
State characteristics
SEA characteristics
Programs + mandates for special populations
• Federal
• State
LEA
Core instructional program administration
Organization and leadership
Special program administration
SCHOOL
Organization and administration
• Coordination
• Instructional support
• External relations
Special services
• Staffing
• Procedures for managing instruction
Students receiving services
• Target
• Nontarget
Core instructional program
LOCAL CONTEXT
School district characteristics
• Size
• Setting
• Expectations
• Political forces
Nature of student population (age, sex, number, proximity)
School community
• Setting
• Expectations
• Parent advocacy

FIGURE 1 THE SCHOOL IN LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL CONTEXT

procedures of the specialized programs (and their presence in the first place), and the connection between specialized programs and the core program.

Two immediate contexts powerfully shape the school instructional program. First, the community served by the school determines the nature of the student body and places demands and expectations on the school. Second, the LEA district office sets policies, provides resources, and governs many aspects of school life. More distant contexts (regional, state) are an additional source of resources, constraints, and expectations. Federal policies reach the school, for the most part, through the SEA and LEA, which interpret requirements, pass on (and redirect) the flow of funds, and monitor the uses to which these funds are put.

Schools differ by level in ways (not shown in Figure 1) that influence the cumulative effects of federal programs.* Elementary schools usually have self-contained classrooms, one or more to a grade level, with a teacher in charge of one particular group of students. The teacher and the school think of their job as promoting the childrens' development and they assume responsibility for the students' instructional programs. Differences in student learning needs are generally accommodated by ability grouping within classrooms, by individualized teaching approaches, or by the introduction of special instructional services.

Structurally, high schools are very different--more like colleges--in the sense that they are organized by subject-matter departments (e.g., English, Vocational Education, Science). Their core instructional program is also more differentiated, with separate classes within each department for different levels of ability. The homeroom teacher on whose rolls the students' names appear may have no instructional contact with that particular group of students. High schools are generally larger than elementary schools, have assistant principals, counselors and other auxilliary personnel to handle the more diverse functions of the secondary level. The job of the high school is to prepare young people for post-graduation endeavors, and students are viewed as being responsible for--or at least having considerable choice in--their own programs of study and elective activities. These distinctions between elementary and high schools make a difference in the way staff associated with federal programs are viewed, whether instruction for special needs students is delivered as a separate subject or class, and whether the school is likely to receive state and federal categorical aid at all.

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* We discuss here only elementary and high schools, the two levels on which our study focused.

One level removed from the operating instructional program, the LEA, shown in Figure 2, is both the medium through which government initiatives pass to reach the school and an object of federal policies. Like the model of the school, the LEA model includes a component responsible for the core instructional program, other components responsible for the special programs, and the remainder responsible for overall organization and administration (including noninstructional matters, like managing transportation or facilities). Unlike the school, the LEA is solely an administrative agency; consequently, federal policies are likely to influence administrative staff positions, kinds of services they provide to the schools (e.g., materials, training, curricular supervision), and the organizational relationships among units in the district office.

LEA arrangements and activities are most strongly influenced by forces in its two immediate contexts: the local community and the state. The state context is not only a major source of educational requirements and funding (varying considerably across states), including those targeted to special needs students, but also the channel for most federal categorical programs. The demography, economy, and setting of the state also have considerable, though less direct, influence on the school and district.

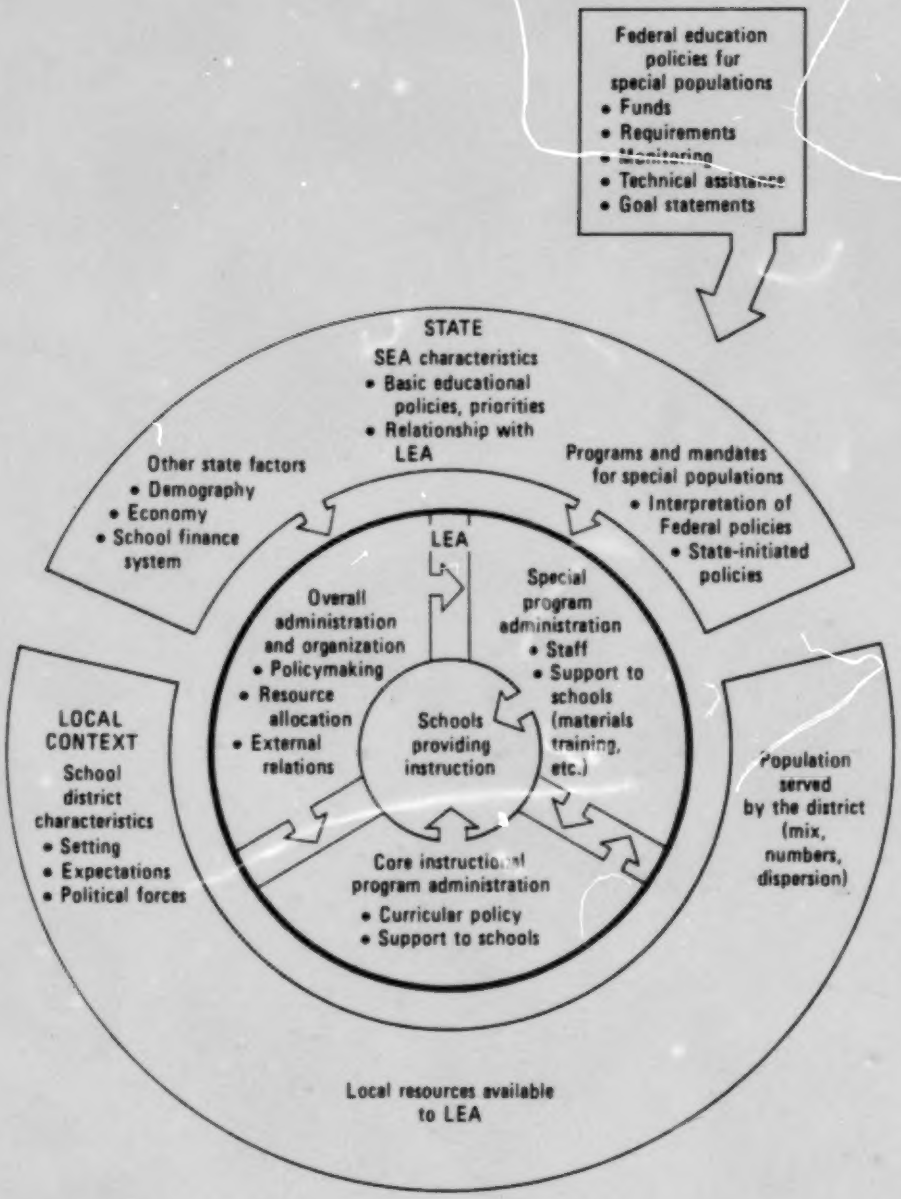
Federal education policies for special populations
• Funds
• Requirements
• Monitoring
• Technical assistance
• Goal statements
STATE
SEA characteristics
• Basic educational policies, priorities
• Relationship with LEA
Other state factors
• Demography
• Economy
• School finance system
Programs and mandates for special populations
• Interpretation of Federal policies
• State-initiated policies
LEA
Overall administration and organization
• Policymaking
• Resource allocation
• External relations
Special program administration
• Staff
• Support to schools (materials training, etc.)
Schools providing instruction
Core instructional program administration
• Curricular policy
• Support to schools
LOCAL CONTEXT
School district characteristics
• Setting
• Expectations
• Political forces
Population served by the district (mix, numbers, dispersion)
Local resources available to LEA

FIGURE 2 THE LEA IN LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL CONTEXT

Federal policies influence local action only as they are transmitted through these layers of state and local context, as shown in Figure 3. The instruments of federal policy include, generally speaking, funds, requirements, monitoring, technical assistance, and goal statements, represented by the vertical lines or "strings" in the diagram. Federal purposes embodied in civil rights mandates are transmitted and enforced through the court system as well.

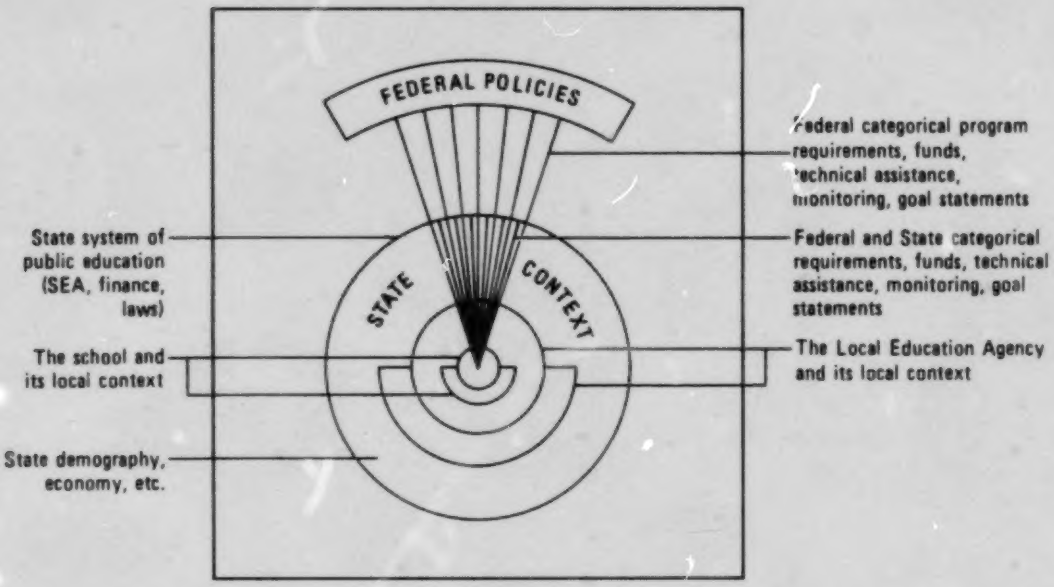
FEDERAL POLICIES
STATE CONTEXT
Federal categorical program requirements, funds, technical assistance, monitoring, goal statements
State system of public education (SEA, finance, laws)
Federal and State categorical requirements, funds, technical assistance, monitoring, goal statements
The school and its local context
The Local Education Agency and its local context
State demography, economy, etc.

FIGURE 3 LINK BETWEEN FEDERAL POLICIES AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Methodology

We investigated cumulative effects through a multiple case design in a sample of twenty LEAs across eight states. Guided by the research topics and conceptual framework described above, we collected data primarily through focused, open-ended interviews with a variety of respondents at school and LEA level. Data were analyzed through a two-stage process: the first stage yielded case reports on each individual site and the second an analysis of patterns across all sites. The methodology and its limitations are summarized briefly below.

The Multiple Case Design

The study was based on a multiple case study design which permitted us to associate activities in particular sites with federal and state education policies and to generalize across--and beyond--the sample. The key elements of this design can be summarized as follows.*

First, the conceptual framework (summarized earlier in this chapter) served as a unifying guide for the selection of sites, choice of respondents, and kind of associations and explanations sought.

Second, sites were systematically chosen to reflect variation on key factors known or believed to affect the phenomena of interest.

Third, experienced site visitors served as the instruments of data collection and were required to draw inferences and to analyze information during fieldwork. Because they had developed the research questions and trained together, they shared a common frame of reference, thus facilitating later cross-site comparisons.

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* This design is discussed more fully in Stearns et al., 1980.

Fourth, case reports were organized by a common set of research topics that permitted analyses across sites while preserving aspects unique to each context. Joint debriefing by site visitors during fieldwork allowed the research topics to accommodate new insights and also initiated the process of cross-site comparison.

Fifth, explanatory propositions ("research assertions") were developed and elaborated throughout the fieldwork. These were "tested" against the findings from all sites; where not supported, they were amended to accommodate refuting or opposing evidence, or were discarded.

The results were statements of effects, which express the general tendencies and limiting conditions of the findings across all cases. To the extent that the sample reflects variation on the limiting conditions, we can generalize from the findings to other LEAs in the nation with similar conditions.*

Sample

We selected districts and schools within them to maximize variation on the factors most likely to influence the cumulative effects of targeted federal policies. We identified these key factors from previous research and from our own experience studying federal policy implementation in schools and districts. Chapter II describes the variations in the sample we actually obtained. Here we briefly describe the rationale and procedure for site selection.

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* See Greene and David, 1981.

To obtain our sample, we first chose states that provided different local contextual conditions. States were selected to vary on:

- The number and type of state categorical programs and related mandates aimed at special-needs students (states with few and states with many such programs).
- The characteristic relationship between SEA and LEAs (degree of control, existence of intermediate agencies).
- State wealth and demography (from those in severe fiscal and demographic decline to those with expanding economies and growing student populations)

By selecting states that varied on these factors, we obtained variation on other factors with implications for federal policy impact (region, type of LEA organization, school finance system, etc.).

The following eight states were selected: California, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, and Wyoming.

Within these states, districts were selected so that they varied in size, setting, number and diversity of special needs students, number and type of special programs, fiscal strength, leadership style and orientation toward special-needs groups. Twenty districts (listed in the acknowledgments to this report) were chosen. The district sample also varied on important secondary factors (e.g., the nature and timing of desegregation, growth or decline in the student population, the political orientation of the community).

Within each district, we chose two to five elementary schools and one or two high schools, depending on the size of the district. All together, the sample included 81 elementary and 25 high schools.* Schools were not chosen to represent the full range of conditions within their respective districts, but rather the conditions under which cumulative effects would be most apparent--that is, schools with at least some students from one or more target groups. Our aim was to obtain a total sample of schools (like our sample of districts) that represented the range of conditions most relevant to cumulative effects at this level. Thus, schools varied in size, setting, number and diversity of special needs students, number and type of programs for these students, and strength of leadership and staff cohesiveness (ranging from schools with a reputation for "having it together" to those considered to be "having big problems").

We developed the sample by stages using a networking and nominating process that started at the state level and worked downward to the schools. Choices at each stage were made to ensure that the full set of study sites would be sufficiently varied to permit generalization beyond the sample.

General statements can be made about schools and districts nationwide from this kind of sample, but with certain limits. Because our sites were selected purposively to vary on factors related to federal policy influences, our sample permits explanation (why an observed effect occurs) and inference about federal influence, but not statements about prevalence or incidence (how widespread particular effects are among the nation's schools). We did not attempt to represent the national proportion of sites with particular characteristics. Our findings, therefore, are not quantitative statements about events in the full population of school districts. Instead they are statements about the relationship between observed events and federal policies under systematically varying local conditions. Our results are "generalizable" in two senses. Where the local conditions appear to alter the relationship between federal action and local events, we draw conclusions that express the limits and variation in federal influence likely to be found wherever these conditions occur. Where an effect holds up across various local conditions, we draw conclusions that assert a central tendency likely to apply broadly beyond the sample.

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* We included elementary and secondary schools (comprehensive high schools), but excluded junior high or middle schools, pre-schools and other early childhood programs, vocational-technical high schools and other forms of specialized schools except elementary magnet schools. We recognize that federal policies may have had important--and potentially different--cumulative effects in these settings. However, where local organization of schools was such that the inclusion of such schools could not be avoided, we did include them. Thus, the sample of 81 schools includes a vocational-technical high school and several middle schools, but no schools for the severely handicapped or preschools.

Data Collection and Analysis

On-site interviews with a variety of school and district respondents formed our primary data source. These data were supplemented by information from documents and phone interviews obtained during the sampling process. Pairs of site visitors collected field data during the spring of 1982, spending 2-5 days in each district depending upon its size. Interview respondents were chosen to reflect variation in their roles, perspectives on special programs, and longevity in the district (to insure sources for retrospective information). Although varying considerably by school district and somewhat by school, respondents typically included:

Elementary School

- Principal
- Classroom teachers
- Specialists
- Aides
- Counselors
- Resource Teachers or Program coordinators
- Other specialized staff (e.g., community liaison staff)

High School

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Departmental teachers
- Specialists
- Aides
- Counselors
- Other specialized staff (e.g., job development staff)

District Office

- Superintendent
- Chairperson, School Board
- Budget or Business Officer
- Director of Curriculum (and staff)
- Special Program Administrators (and staff)
- Research & Testing Officer
- Other specialized staff (e.g., staff developer, Title IX coordinator)

Across all 20 sites, we interviewed approximately 900 respondents.

The interviews were based on topical guides tailored to each respondent role. Site visitors were free to pose questions in terms most relevant to the respondent. They probed responses for clarification, hidden assumptions, and substantiating details. Answers from several respondents were cross-checked to clarify or validate information. Some questions were designed to elicit factual or descriptive information; others sought individual perceptions, interpretations, and conclusions.

After data collection, there were two stages of data analysis: within site and across sites. For the within-site analyses, site visitors developed individual case reports for each district. Besides describing district and school background and programs, each case report addressed the research assertions. The aim was to confirm, amend, or refute these assertions as they applied to each particular case. (No assertion survived the full analysis process intact; some parts of assertions proved either trivial or wrong when investigated locally, others were qualified in major ways during both phases of analysis.) The case reports thus contained inferences drawn by the site visitors across respondents and schools along with supporting evidence. Direct quotations from respondents were incorporated when they illustrated a general finding or otherwise typified responses.

The cross-site analyses were begun informally through a series of "debriefings" in which site visitors discussed the similarities and differences among sites. From participating in the debriefings, reading the case reports, and checking back with site visitors for elaboration or clarification, the cross-site analysts (who were also site visitors) examined findings from all cases for each research assertion. This effort began by comparing findings generated by one or more sites against all the sites. Where the findings differed across sites, we tried to associate the differences with local or state factors. In many cases differences were identified but not fully explained by variations in local context. After determining the general applicability of findings and qualifying them when necessary (or noting variation and our inability to connect it to particular factors), we then illustrated cross-site findings with quotations or examples drawn from individual case reports.

This report represents the culmination of the analysis process. The three findings chapters (Chapters III, IV, and V) present the most significant patterns of effect in each of the three spheres of activity (instruction, organization and administration, decisionmaking). The report discusses the extent to which various patterns of response to federal policy were found across the sites visited and, equally important, how they varied with features of the state, district, or school context. The significant contextual features were seldom simple demographic ones. For example, while large LEAs have more administrators at the district office than small LEAs, the extent to which district administrators infringed on the authority of principals depended on the roles played by principals and on the amount of authority the superintendent kept at the district level. It did not depend on the size of the district.

For the sake of efficiency and clarity, we have been selective in the presentation of the data on which our conclusions are based. Qualitative data of the sort we gathered cannot be meaningfully quantified or neatly summarized in tables. We have chosen, instead, to summarize the salient tendencies of the data in narrative form, illustrated by representative examples and quotes that convey most succinctly what our respondents thought and reported. Quotes were selected systematically to represent typical patterns among a particular group of respondents or opposing points of view where substantial discrepancies appeared across respondents. (In order to preserve confidentiality, quotes have been reported in such a way that the respondent cannot be identified.) Case examples were chosen in a similar systematic fashion to illustrate findings that held across sites or to point up contrasts among them.

Limitations

This study's findings are subject to the following limitations:

(1) The principal data source was open-ended interviews with a variety of respondents at school and district level, which yielded perceptions, impressions, and judgments, but not direct evidence of effect on teacher performance, student performance, or curricular appropriateness. Classroom observation, student test score analysis, and analysis of curricular materials might have provided more direct evidence, but were beyond the scope of the effort.

(2) Two types of school districts were not included in our sample: (a) the largest and most troubled city districts such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles (due to the difficulty of gaining access and of adequately studying the LEA, given limited resources). And (b) districts of all sizes with relatively small target student populations, such as LEAs located in affluent suburbs (due to the fact that such districts provide relatively little information about federal effects, given limited resoruces). However, we chose some schools in our sample sites to reflect conditions typically found in these two types of LEA: e.g., schools located in low-income neighborhoods with heavy, diverse concentrations of target students, and schools in affluent residential areas with few target students. Our findings probably reflect the cumulative effects in the excluded districts, only in a more moderate form.*

(3) The study took place at a particular and unusual point in the history of federal education policy, when federal aid to education was undergoing considerable change and faced apparent threat. This could have encouraged our respondents to respond more positively (if they favored federal programs and wished to "put in a good word") or more negatively (if they disliked the programs and wished to eliminate them). Either way, respondents' true "bottom-line" assessment of the programs was likely to emerge. (See discussion in Chapter VI). To get an accurate picture in addition to respondents' inferences, we persistently probed for the factual bases of claims during interviews and subsequently corroborated respondents' accounts, whenever we suspected a positive or negative slant.

(4) Studying the effects of federal programs requires comparing the current state of affairs with the past. Although respondents were chosen to maximize historical information, the inferences drawn are nevertheless based on retrospective information, and are thus subject to possible distortions.

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* We also did not include in the sample any large LEAs with a decentralized organization (LEA divided into regions, each with some degree of autonomous control); cumulative effects of a different sort or order of magnitude may occur in such settings in addition to the effects we describe.

II SCHOOL AND DISTRICT SETTINGS*

In this chapter we describe the schools, school districts, and states in which we collected data. Our first purpose is to demonstrate the range of variation in the sample on factors expected to influence the effects we investigated. The school and district samples encompass considerable variation in student and community demographics, fiscal health, political climate, and participation in federal and state programs targeted to students with special needs. It is this range of variation that forms the basis for generalizing findings beyond the specific schools and districts in the sample.

The second purpose of this chapter is to convey a fuller sense of what local settings look like through profiles of several schools and districts. These profiles suggest some of the ways in which social, organizational, and a host of other contextual variables combine in complex and dynamic ways with federal/state funding and regulation in schools and school systems. These combinations of factors at the school, district, and state levels proved more useful than the individual variables in explaining the overall effects of federal programs as well as differences across schools, districts, and states. The profiles are intended to prepare the reader for Chapters III-V, in which we report effects on student services, school and district organization and administration, and local decisionmaking.

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* The principal author of this chapter is Susan M. Peterson, Bay Area Research Group.

Sampling procedures were described in Chapter I. Although we obtained the sample by going through the states to identify districts and through districts to select schools, this chapter begins at the school level. We describe variation in size, student populations and other factors across the full sample of 56 elementary and 25 secondary schools and present profiles of three schools. Next we describe the sample of 20 districts and present profiles of four districts. In the final section, we discuss some important state-level factors; included in this section is a summary table.

The School Sample

The criteria used to select schools were level, differences in concentration and mix of special needs groups (and programs), and capacity to deliver services. Because our study focuses on federal and state programs for students with special needs, the sample is biased toward schools serving such students. However, we included substantial variation across the schools in the concentration and mix of targeted students and the size and mix of categorical programs so that we would be able to detect differences in effect associated with variation on these factors. Our sample includes schools with few special needs students and only one or two small targeted programs as well as schools in which the majority of students belong to two or more targeted groups and multiple programs coexist.

Below, we describe the sample of 81 schools and present profiles of three schools. The description of the sample is organized by level, focusing first on the 56 elementary schools and then on the 25 high schools.

Elementary Schools

Almost half of the 56 elementary schools are located in districts serving more than 20,000 students. More than two-thirds of the schools include students in kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade. Other grade structures are found mainly in small rural communities, although the elementary schools in one large urban site have been paired for desegregation purposes (so that one school houses K-3 and the other provides kindergarten plus grades 4 and 5).

The elementary schools range in size from 220 to 1,460 students. However, about two-thirds serve between 250 and 500 students, and most of the rest have student bodies of 500 to 750. About three-fourths of the schools have substantial numbers of children from low-income families; in some cases the concentration of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches exceeds 75%. About a third of the schools also serve populations of limited English proficient (LEP) students. Most of these students are Hispanic in origin, but several schools have experienced recent influxes of other LEP groups (mainly Southeast Asian refugee children). Some schools in the sample serve children from a few families in each of several different language groups. Roughly one-fourth serve migrant and/or American Indian students. All the elementary schools serve some children identified as handicapped; gifted students are sometimes included within this diverse target population.

Fifty schools (almost 90% of the sample) provide Title I-funded remedial instruction to disadvantaged students. Funding from state sources provides additional support for remediation in about 35% of the sample schools.* Federal or state funds (sometimes a combination of both) support bilingual or English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs in about 40% of the schools; another 10% (schools with small numbers of LEP students) provide ESL tutoring that is supported entirely by the district's general funds.

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* School-level data comparing federal and state contributions to remedial instruction were not ordinarily available. District-level figures indicate that Title I grants substantially exceeded state compensatory education and remediation funds in most sites that received both.

All the elementary schools provide special education services supported by state and (except in New Mexico) federal funds.

Secondary Schools

The sample includes 25 high schools. Half are located in districts serving between 22,000 and 110,000 students; most of these schools are in urban settings. Nineteen schools serve students in grades 9-12, five include 10-12, and one rural high school encompasses grades 8-12. School sizes range from 400 to 3,000. Three schools in very small districts have student bodies of less than 500. Seven (including four urban high schools) serve 500 to 1,000 students. Half the sample serve between 1,000 and 2,000 students; the remaining five have enrollments in excess of 2,000.

Small districts are often served by a single comprehensive high school; in these cases the student body generally reflects the ethnic and socioeconomic makeup of the community at large. A high school in a large district, on the other hand, does not necessarily represent a cross-section of the entire community. The sample includes several all-white schools (located in small communities with very few ethnic minority residents) and one school that is nearly 100% Black. Most of the high schools visited, however, serve student populations that are fairly diverse ethnically and socioeconomically.

The mix of services targeted to special needs populations in high schools is somewhat different from that targeted to the elementary grades. Although attention is now being devoted to remedial programs for secondary students (partly in response to proficiency test requirements), only five of the 25 high schools receive Title I support. Reading classes and math labs in the high school sample are typically supported by state or local funds. All the high schools provide some special education services for handicapped students. Almost two-thirds provide ESL instruction for LEP students; most of these schools also provide some bilingual instruction (for example, content area classes taught by Spanish-speaking teachers or by monolingual English speakers with simultaneous translation by an aide).

School Profiles

Exhibits 1-3 are profiles of three schools visited in the course of the study. These profiles illustrate some ways in which a particular school's context (a unique combination of school, district, and state factors) influences the nature of targeted services present in the school. For example, the kinds of children who live in a school's attendance area, district policies for allocating resources, and the availability of targeted state funds, all influence the level of financial support for services to special needs groups. Jackson Elementary*, profiled in Exhibit 1, is an example of a school serving high concentrations of disadvantaged and LEP students through multiple programs.

Schools also vary in their approaches to management of targeted services. Jackson and Park Elementary (profiled in Exhibit 2) are similar in size, and both schools provide a variety of targeted services through pullout programs. Park's principal and staff have taken a number of actions intended to coordinate special services with the overall instructional program; at Jackson, the targeted services are managed essentially independently of classroom instruction.

Some of the differences in the way targeted services are provided at the elementary and secondary levels can be seen in the contrast between the first two profiles and the profile of Grant High School (Exhibit 3). Grant offers its students a wider variety of targeted services than most secondary

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* The names of all three schools are fictitious; however, each profile describes an actual school from the sample.

Exhibit 1

JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jackson Elementary School is located in a low-rent, high-transience neighborhood and serves a predominantly Hispanic community. Of the 548 students, 90% are considered educationally disadvantaged. Because of the high transience, the school staff is tremendously frustrated because they are constantly losing students and getting new ones. The problem of developing and maintaining a workable instructional program has recently been exacerbated by an influx of Asian refugees who speak little or no English. Besides the large number and variety of students with special instructional needs, there is the additional problem of overcrowding. The school's physical location precludes expansion and every square inch, including several portable classrooms, is in constant use.

In spite of these problems, the teaching staff are dedicated and enthusiastic about their work; they are extremely supportive of the special services in their schools. While they recognize the tremendous need for special programs, they're concerned about the number of pull-out programs, believing that "these children need stability, not constant moving around." With a special program budget of $258,000 the school has virtually all the categorical aid that is available including state and federal compensatory programs (which support part-time classroom aides and pull-out instruction in the reading lab), a state-funded improvement program in addition to several bilingual classrooms, and a pull-out program for migrant students. As a result, there is constant movement of students in and out of rooms and complex scheduling which works because the students remember where they are to go. As a classroom teacher described the situation from her perspective: "I have to work around every program--I'm what's left, yet I'm the base program."

The programs seem to operate independently, because their structure is determined by the program manager's interpretation of the rules and regulations rather than by any sound educational philosophy. "The guidelines say everything must be 'over and above,' so it's dictated that we use pull-outs." The program manager, who also carries the title of vice principal, has virtually total responsibility for the categorical programs and views her role as ensuring compliance. She is responsible for the special program budgets as well as for ensuring that each operates by the book. In essence, she relieves the principal of most of his paperwork and all program responsibilities.

The principal is new to Jackson although he has been in the district for 30 years, including many years as principal in a wealthier school. He is sympathetic toward the students and toward the special services but does not approve of the restriction that program staff can work only with identified students. (Since most students are "in need," many teachers share this feeling.) In spite of the substantial amount of money and services in school, he remains ignorant of much of what goes on because "there are 75 people, each doing different things."

Exhibit 2

PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The 500 students of Park Elemetary are a very heterogeneous group. Some are drawn from a white, professional neighborhood, some from a public housing project in a high-density, mostly Black neighborhood and some from the University area. Because of refugee resettlement (and some foreign university faculty and student families) there are 35 LEP children.

Half of the students attend either Title I extended-day kindergartens, daily remedial reading or math sessions, ESL tutoring (two afternoons a week), or resource room (special education) activities, in addition to their basic instruction in regular classrooms and their art, music, and physical education classes.

Teachers at Park Elementary have nothing but praise for their principal, because in planning the school's program and in solving problems of scheduling or resolving seemingly contradictory district policies, he always thinks first of what's best for the children. The school's part-time counselor handles the meetings and paperwork involved in special program administration and coordination with the district office.

Besides the regular classroom teachers, the staff includes some full-time specialist teachers and aides and quite a few itinerant staff. Even the itinerant teachers are included in faculty meetings and feel they are a part of the school. The principal worked with the entire faculty to come up with policies that would maximize the benefits of special programs for children and also be equitable for the specialists and regular classroom teachers. The policies are that:

- Each child is assigned to a regular classroom (homeroom) teacher, and each classroom teacher is, thus, the person primarily responsible for that student's instructional program.

- Classroom teachers and specialists decide how much special help students will get (within strict district guidelines and sometimes in coordination with special district staff) and they negotiate students' schedules by the end of the second week of school, so that no further instructional time is lost.

- Specialist teachers and aides play a support role to the regular classroom; i.e., their pull-out schedules must be minimally disruptive to regular classroom teachers' schedules and their curriculum "is to support the areas that the classroom teacher is working on."

- Because classroom teachers have students for a larger portion of the day, special program teachers and aides are assigned more duties such as watching children at lunchtime in the cafeteria, at assemblies, and on the playground and "everybody pulls duty."

Exhibit 3
GRANT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

A large urban high school drawing students mainly from low-income neighborhoods, Grant is one of only five high schools in the sample receiving Title I funds. Of Grant's 2300 students, 70% are educationally disadvantaged. Almost 20% have limited proficiency in English; 10% are identified as migrants. Another 10% participate in special education programs. Like many other urban high schools, Grant has not always had such high concentrations of special needs students. According to the principal, "Today we're dealing mainly with a type of student who would have dropped out 20 years ago to work. We're expected to keep these kids in school now. There are no jobs for dropouts."

The staff are in general agreement about the biggest challenges they face: turnover rates that approach 100% over the course of the year, poor attendance, low motivation, and unrealistic expectations on the part of students. A teacher comments, "Some students talk of wanting to become engineers or doctors, but they have no idea of the skills they will need to pursue their goals. I don't tell them to lower their expectations, but I do try to give them a better sense of the directions they need to take to get where they want to go."

The main responses to these challenges have been a strong emphasis on order and discipline (the principal has a local reputation for "running a tight ship") and on remedial instruction and other specialized classes. Remedial classes pervade the school's program and are supported by a combination of federal, state, and local funds. Some students also participate in vocational classes supported by set-aside funds. Non-English-speaking students attend ESL classes and special sections of courses in the required content areas like math, history, and science. Tutorial assistance and counseling are available to migrants.

Grant's principal considers the school's sizable Title I allocation to be an essential part of his budget, particularly in a time when other resources are scarce. "Comp ed funds give us the resources to help the 16-year-old with a history of poor motivation who suddenly realizes that this is his last chance to learn to read so that he can find a job." At the same time, he and some of the Title I staff oppose regulations governing in-school targeting.

Life at Grant has been affected by two important changes in the past four years: (1) the district's desegregation plan has brought Anglo middle-class ninth grade students into the school; and (2) state law now requires all students to pass a proficiency test. Staff in the remedial programs all agree that their courses have been strongly affected by the content and format of the test. Whether this influence has been positive or negative is the subject of debate. The desegregation plan created considerable anxiety among students and parents when it was first implemented, but now "the school's image is beginning to change; the students are spreading the word that this isn't such a bad place." Desegregation has also meant having a group of students whose attendance is good and who create a demand for college preparatory courses like algebra.

schools in our sample. However, its large size and the press of other problems and priorities (in this case desegregation and minimum competency tests) mean that staff outside the highest levels of administration are rarely familiar with the full range of services available to students with special needs.

The District Sample

The criteria used to select school districts were size, concentration and mix of special needs students, level of financial resources, and capacity to deliver services. The 20 sample districts vary considerably in level and mix of resources (per-pupil expenditures and proportions of the budget coming from federal, state, and local resources). Some sites are located in expanding areas with healthy economies, while other have faced declining enrollments and economic downturns which have led to a shrinking resource base. The sites also vary in their capacity to deliver services supported by federal and state targeted programs because of differences in local attitudes toward special needs groups, leadership qualities represented in district officials, the relationship between the district office and the school board, and the relationship between the district office and the schools.

Below we describe the district sample. Most of this description is organized by district size (defined as number of pupils served), because increased size is strongly related to increased organizational complexity (more schools and staff, specialization of functions, levels in the hierarchy, etc.), and the effects of federal funding and regulation are often assumed to differ between large and small districts. This section also describes the variation in size and funding level of targeted programs across our sample districts and presents profiles of four districts.

Small Sites

Seven districts serving between 1,200 and 3,500 students are included in the sample of small sites. The sites are located in six states from the northern, southern, and western regions of the country. Most serve rural communities with 10,000 to 20,000 residents. Three are in isolated areas, at least 60 miles from the nearest urban center. The small districts encompass three to nine schools, depending partly on the number of students and partly on geography. In spite of their small populations, several districts serve entire counties encompassing scattered tiny communities, each with its own elementary school. Only one site, however, has more than a single high school.

Most of these small communuties are politically conservative. Community interest and involvement in the schools is generally low, except (in a couple of cases) for long-standing rivalries on the football field. In some cases, local power structures are closeknit and dominated by long-time residents. In these sites a certain coolness toward outsiders is often apparent, particularly when they appear to challenge long-held local values and customs. In other cases, new highways or energy development have brought expansion and diversity to formerly isolated communities.

In five of the seven sites, student populations are 85% or more Anglo. Only one site has a sizable Black student population (almost 25%). One site serves a Hispanic majority, and three others have small LEP populations that participate in bilingual or ESL programs. District-wide concentrations of children from low-income families vary from about 15% to more than 50% (although a site with a low district-level concentration may include a school where most of the children come from poor families).

District offices typically have four or fewer full-time administrators, each with diverse responsibilities. Annual budgets range from about $2.2 million to $13.5 million, depending both on size and on location. Three districts have experienced significant budget reductions because of economic conditions and/or tax limitation measures; in these sites cutbacks have occurred in both administrative and teaching positions. District officials in the other four sites characterized their current fiscal condition as good. Reductions in federal funding are viewed with less alarm in these four sites, which are located in southern and western states with healthy economies.

Moderate-Sized Sites

The sample of moderate-sized sites comprises six districts serving between 6,200 and 14,000 students. Most of these districts serve children from small cities with 35,000 to 75,000 residents. Three communities are located in western states; their populations have grown between 20% and 50% percent over the past decade. The other three communities, located in the midwest, have remained stable or undergone small declines in population.

Twenty years ago these districts served predominantly white communities. Although three have retained large Anglo majorities, two have experienced considerable diversification in the ethnic makeup of their school-aged populations. In another site, the majority of the population is of Hispanic descent, and the local community has experienced a resurgence of interest in maintaining its Hispanic heritage. In two districts 60% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Four of the six serve LEP children (primarily, but not exclusively Hispanic), and two have small Indian populations.

The school systems in these moderate-sized districts vary in size and organizational structure. Annual budgets range from $15 million to $45 million. Most of the districts encompass 9 to 25 schools (one countywide district includes more than 30). District offices are typically staffed by 10 to 25 administrators plus resource and support personnel, although one of the smaller sites assigns some district-level functions to school principals. Administrators at these sites tend to play fewer roles than their counterparts in the small sites. Organizational structures are not especially complex, but they do reflect some hierarchical qualities, including recognized distinctions between senior-level and junior-level staff.

Large Sites

The seven remaining sites have student populations in excess of 20,000. Three are municipal districts, serving cities of 150,000 to 600,000. The others are countywide districts in southern states; most include an urban center. These large sites reflect more internal diversity than the smaller districts in terms of local political climate and population characteristics such as ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Students from ethnic minority groups constitute between 40% and 60% of the enrollment in most sites. Two sites have sizable Hispanic communities, and most of the rest have some Hispanic or Asian LEP students. District-level concentrations of students from low-income families vary substantially, but all the sites include some schools with high concentrations (70% or more) of poor children.

Most of the large districts serve between 45,000 and 70,000 students and encompass 75 to 140 schools, with annual budgets of $90 to $170 million. Enrollments have declined by 15% to 33% over the past decade in most of these urban sites. Even in three "sunbelt" sites, where community populations have increased substantially, decreases in the school-aged population have necessitated school closings.

These large sites have been the setting for a variety of controversies, and most have hired new superintendents within the past 5 years. Desegregation stands out as the most widespread controversy associated with federal intervention. In five sites, desegregation has been shaped and monitored by the courts; in the other two, local officials were able to develop plans acceptable to the Office of Civil Rights without going to court. In most districts desegregation is several years old and no longer the subject of heated debate. However, the sample includes one site that is currently in the early stages of implementing a court-ordered plan which has entailed school closings and mandatory busing. Desegregation is highly controversial in the community and is the overwhelming concern in the district office.

Federal and State Support for Special Needs Populations

A number of factors influence the level of categorical support for services to special pupil populations in a given district. Among the important factors are district size, concentration of special needs students, availability of targeted funds from state sources, and aggressiveness with which district officials pursue outside funding. Our sample encompasses considerable variation on all these factors and, hence, on the level and mix of federal and state funding sources:

- All 20 districts receive Title I funds to provide supplementary instruction and other services to disadvantaged students. In 1981-82, grants ranged from about $40,000 for a program serving 85 children in a district of 1,200 to more than $6 million for a program covering 71 schools in a district of 110,000. Half the sampled districts also receive state funds for services to disadvantaged children. Funding levels and purposes associated with these programs vary, but they tend to provide considerably fewer dollars than Title I.

- Eighteen districts receive federal funds through P.L. 94-142 to help support instruction and related services for handicapped students. All districts receive state money for the same purpose. State funds typically constitute a substantially larger part of the district's special education budget than do federal dollars. Special education budgets in the sites range from less than $.5 million (supporting services to 70 students in a district of 1,250) to more than $10 million in several large districts. (The largest program involves 11,500 students and 500 staff; its budget is $17 million.)

- Federal support for LEP students includes grants from Title VII and the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act. As of 1981-82, six sample sites receive funds through one or both of these sources. Three others originated bilingual programs under Title VII grants that have since expired. In these districts the programs have been continued (sometimes in a reduced format) with support from state and local sources. Although early Title VII grants were sometimes large, federal grants for LEP programs are now fairly small (the largest Title VII grant in the sample amounted to $160,000, the largest Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act grant to $57,000). In almost every case federal funds are supplemented by state or local monies. Nine sites receive state funds targeted for use with LEP students. Two other sites have small ESL tutoring programs which receive no specially targeted state or federal money.

District Profiles

The district profiles presented in Exhibits 4-6 illustrate some of the important features of the district-level setting for federal programs and mandates. The first profile describes a pair of moderate-sized sites, both of which have high concentrations of special needs students and both of which have actively pursued outside support for special programs. This pair of sites demonstrates how differing sets of community values and district leadership patterns contribute to different attitudes toward outside intervention and perceptions of its effects. The second profile examines a small district in a rapidly growing region of the west. This is one of the least "impacted" districts in the sample, in the sense that it serves few students identified as having special needs and it receives few targeted funds. It is also one of few sites where the local economy is expanding and district officials report no shortage of funds. The final profile focuses on a large urban site, with a high proportion of disadvantaged students. Declining enrollments and resource cutbacks due to poor economic conditions statewide make this one of the many urban school systems in the nation facing retrenchment.

State Context

In this final section we briefly review some characteristics of the eight states in which our study sites are located. Although the state level was not a focus of the study, states represent an important part of the system within which federal dollars and regulations have acted upon local structures and practices. Therefore, state-level variation is an essential consideration in determining the representativeness of our sites and the

Exhibit 4

CITY PARK AND FACTORY TOWN

The varied settings that two districts similar in size and concentration of special needs populations provide for federal and state programs can be seen in a comparison of two sites, referred to here as City Park and Factory Town. Both serve communities of 30,000 to 40,000 and student populations of 6,000.

City Park, a close-in suburb of a large city, is a traditionally liberal community. Education has always been a high priority for its citizens, who show keen interest in school programs. When City Park became active in the fair housing movement of the 1960s, its Black and disadvantaged populations increased dramatically. Test scores declined, and district officials began to seek support for compensatory programs from private foundations even before the passage of ESEA in 1965. The district office has continued its aggressive pursuit of outside funding, including discretionary grants for school improvement as well as the categorical aid that currently suppports a large number of special needs programs.

Today, the community's traditional commitment to providing a well-rounded education competes for students and staff time as well as for diminishing financial resources with the more recent (but also strong) local commitment to providing remediation in basic skills. A general sentiment exists in the district office and the schools that there are probably "too many pull-outs" between the remediation efforts and the locally initiated enrichment activities which also take time away from classroom instruction. District staff and the school board, however, view each program as making a valuable contribution to students' education. Further, they see the enrichment programs as important to retaining their nondisadvantaged and nonminority students. As a result, they find it difficult to make choices between valued activities.

Factory Town, on the other hand, is a traditionally conservative blue collar community in which the residents and the school board generally leave educational decisions to the professionals in the district office. Decisionmaking power is concentrated in the superintendent's cabinet, a group of five men each of whom has been in the district office for 10 years or longer.

Like City Park, Factory Town experienced a dramatic change in the ethnic makeup of the community, and particularly its school-aged population, during the 1960s. Black, Hispanic, and Filipino students together account for 60% of the population. Relationships among the various groups are not always smooth, athough it has been more than 10 years since violence erupted in the wake of school desegregation. The concentration of students from low-income families (more than 60% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches) is the highest in its county.

In 1981-82, Factory Town received about $2.5 million in federal and state funds to support compensatory, bilingual, and special education services, plus additional monies from ESAA and federal funds for a small program targeted to American Indian students. District leaders regard these funds as essential and are careful to comply with most regulations governing their use. At the same time, they view outside intervention with some suspicion and voice strong criticism of regulations that impose financial burdens on the district or provide opportunities for parents (e.g., of handicapped children) or others to challenge the existing authority structure.

Exhibit 5

BOOMTOWN

Located in a state rich in natural resources, Boomtown has grown by more than 60% since the 1970 census. It enjoys the benefits of a healthy economy, with little unemployment or poverty. One of the more isolated sites, it is located a hundred miles from the nearest urban center. The school district serves a central community plus three small settlements outside of town; the total population of the county is about 22,000.

District finances are strong because of the energy boom. District officials in Boomtown feel little need to pursue outside funding sources and indicate that they would be discouraged from doing so by the SEA. Less than 10% of their annual budget of $13.5 million comes from federal or state categorical programs. Special education is by far the largest of the few special needs programs in Boomtown. Resource rooms exist in all nine schools, and programs for more severely handicapped children have been set up at one of the "in town" elementary schools and the high school. The only other federal program is Title I, which provides reading instruction to 107 of the district's 2900 students. Local funds support a small ESL tutoring program, which serves 16 students.

Rapid growth has brought to Boomtown's schools a number of students characterized locally as "transients" because their families have moved frequently to follow the development of new energy sources. Not all these students qualify for Title I or special education. The low incidence of poverty, combined with state-imposed limits on the number of students a Title I teacher may serve, means that the Title I program has a limited number of slots and can accommodate only a fraction of the low-achieving transient students. Many teachers believe that an additional Title I-like remedial program should be started for the specific purpose of helping the transient students "catch up" with their peers. However, the school board and district office have not yet taken any concrete action in this direction.

Exhibit 6
CAPITAL CITY

Capital City's student population of 70,000 numbers it among the 30 largest school systems in the country. Located in the northeast, Capital City has experienced almost no growth over the last 10 years. Its fairly diverse local economy has given it some shielding from the factory shutdowns and resulting high unemployment rates that have plagued other cities in the northeast and midwest. In general, however, Capital City represents a large urban district faced with steadily diminishing resources and declining enrollments.

Capital City's student population has decreased by about a third in the past decade; this amounts to a loss of nearly 40,000 students. Schools have closed each year. As of 1981-82, the district encompassed 139 schools, with 13 more scheduled to close in 1982-83. Declining state and local revenues (exacerbated by the declining enrollment) have created severe fiscal stress.

Minority students account for 40% of Capital City's enrollment. The concentration of students from low-income families is high; 70% of the elementary school students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Low income ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods are spread throughout the city.

Politics in Capital City reflect a mixture of conservative and liberal elements. During most of the 1970s the district resisted external pressure to desegregate the schools, and taxpayers repeatedly rejected attempts to increase financial support for the schools. Since 1978, a court-ordered desegregation plan has been in effect that calls for pairing schools from racially different neighborhoods and entails large-scale busing. Few schools have been unaffected. School closings made necessary by declining enrollments and fiscal stress have added to the disruption of reorganizing the elementary program and busing students for desegregation purposes. In most respects, however, the general climate surrounding desegregation since 1978 has been one of cooperation. A younger and more liberal school board was elected following the court order.

Capital City's district administration has traditionally been selective in its pursuit of federal and state categorical funds. However, increasing fiscal stress has recently contributed to a new interest in outside funding. The district receives a total of about $20 million in federal and state funds for compensatory education and special education plus ESAA monies to support desegregation-related activities. Additional federal and state sources support other local activities (e.g., a program for gifted students is supported with Title IV-C funds; a small tutorial program is funded by the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act). Administration of targeted programs (except for special education and special vocational programs) is the responsibility of the Federal State Programs Director, who supervises individual project coordinators. As part of a recent reorganization of the district office, the Federal/State Programs department was made part of the Division of Student Services.

degree to which findings about schools and districts can be generalized to the nation.

The states in which we studied LEAs and schools were selected to vary in: (1) the number and nature of the state's programs for special needs groups, (2) the amount and kind of state financing of education, and (3) the nature of the relationships between LEAs and the state education agency. In obtaining variation on these three generic factors, we also obtained variation on many related factors such as region of the county, state fiscal, and political climate (e.g., degree of commitment to civil rights and special needs populations) and many demographic characteristics. The eight sample states are: California, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, and Wyoming.

State support for the special needs populations served by the major federal laws and programs varies substantially. Although all the sample states require and support special education for handicapped students, they differ with respect to the way they define educational handicaps, the extent to which disabled students are served in regular classrooms, and the nature of education-related services. Our eight states represent considerable diversity in the extent to which they support special services to disadvantaged and LEP students:

- California and Massachusetts both provide funds to local school systems with disadvantaged children*; both states also require districts to provide special services to their LEP students and provide special funding to support these services.
- Ohio and Florida both provide state funding for remedial instruction (although Ohio distributes funds based on poverty concentrations, while Florida uses test scores); both states permit rather than require programs for LEP students.

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* California requires districts to rank schools according to poverty or achievement scores and to allocate the state funds only to schools with the greatest need; state funds awarded to Massachusetts districts on the basis of poverty are not tracked below the district level.

- New Mexico and Louisiana do not provide state funds for compensatory education; however, both permit and support bilingual programs. New Mexico is also interesting because it is the only state that does not participate in P.L. 94-142.

- Missouri and Wyoming have not developed state programs for compensatory or bilingual education. However, Missouri does provide partial support for salaries of remedial reading teachers; this money is often used locally to increase the number of Title I staff.

The eight states also vary substantially on demographic measures as well as economic conditions, factors assumed to affect both the need for and the capacity to provide targeted services over and above the regular school program. With regard to size, public school enrollments in the state sample range from 98,000 in Wyoming (the state with the third smallest population), to more than 4 million in California (the country's most populous state). Six states experienced declining enrollments over the 1970s (with declines ranging from less than 4% in New Mexico to about 19% in Missouri and Ohio). However, Florida and Wyoming were two of the nine states in the country where enrollments actually increased over the decade. In four states, ethnic minority students (Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian) constitute 30% or more of the public school enrollment.

With respect to economic conditions, the sample includes states from the sunbelt (e.g., Florida), states that have benefitted from recent activity in energy development (Louisiana, Wyoming, New Mexico), and states from the midwest that have been among those hardest hit by recent economic downturns (Ohio, Missouri). Also included are two states where tax limitation measures enacted by the electorate have created fiscal problems for schools and other public service agencies (California and Massachusetts) that formerly enjoyed relatively high levels of state and local funding.

Finally, the sample of states provides diversity with respect to state/local relations, which are influenced by the state role in education policy, amount of state regulations, and traditions of local autonomy. Wyoming, for example, has a strong tradition of local autonomy with minimal regulation, monitoring or assistance from the state level. California, by contrast, exercises considerable control over local activities through state programs and policies, extensive regulation, and monitoring. Massachusetts falls somewhere in between--a state which monitors closely for civil rights compliance while preserving the tradition of local autonomy in program content.

An overview of the study sample is presented in Table 1. The 20 sites are shown within the eight states. For each site the community setting, student population, and sources of external categorical funding for special populations are displayed.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY SAMPLE

State	Community Setting	Student Population (Change since 1970)	Ethnic Mix of Student Pop.	Number of Schools	Federal & State Funds for Services to Targeted Populations			
					Disadvantaged	Handi-capped	Limited English Proficient	Other
CA	Small industrial city; pop. 33,000	6,200 (stable)	41% Anglo 32% Black 20% Hispanic 7% Other	9	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	ESAA, Fed. Indian Ed.
CA	Urban; pop. 218,000	48,000 (gradual decline)	58% Anglo 10% Black 30% Hispanic 2% Other	78	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	State	ESAA; Title I Migrant
FL	Isolated rural county; pop. 17,000	3,400 (gradual decline)	75% Anglo 23% Black 2% Other	7	Fed. & State	Fed & State	---	---
FL	Heterogeneous county; pop. 273,000	48,000 (gradual decline)	84% Anglo 14% Black 2% Other	77	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---	Title I Migrant
FL	Urban/suburban county; pop. 647,000 (city of 272,000)	112,000 (rapid growth)	75% Anglo 20% Black 4% Hispanic 1% Other	130	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	State	ESAA; Title I Migrant
LA	Isolated rural county; pop. 9,000	2,200 (stable)	93% Anglo 7% Black	7	Federal	Fed. & State	State	Title I Migrant
LA	Urban/rural county; pop. 252,000 (city of 206,000)	45,000 (gradual decline)	45% Anglo 55% Black	76	Federal	Fed. & State	---	ESAA
LA	Urban/suburban/rural county; pop. 366,000 (city of 218,000)	60,000 (some growth)	55% Anglo 45% Black	116	Federal	Fed. & State	---*	Title I Migrant
MA	Rural community; pop. 13,000	2,100 (gradual decline)	92% Anglo 3% Black 5% Hispanic	4	Federal	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---

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*District supports a small ESL tutoring program with general funds.

					Federal & State Funds for Services to Targeted Populations			
State	Community Setting	Student Population (change since 1970)	Ethnic Mix of Student Pop.	Number of Schools	Disadvantaged	Handicapped	Limited English Proficient	Other
MA	Suburban community; pop. 34,000	3,600 (large decline)	89% Anglo 3% Black 2% Hispanic 6% Other	9	Federal	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---
MA	Urban; pop. 152,000	24,000 (large decline)	49% Anglo 29% Black 21% Hispanic 1% Other	46	Federal	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---
MO	Suburb; pop 43,000	6,300 (gradual decline)	26% Anglo 74% Black	10	Federal	Fed. & State	---*	---
MO	Small city; pop. 77,000	12,000 (gradual decline)	80% Anglo 20% Black	28	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---	---
NM	Rural county; pop. 10,000	1,200 (stable)	20% Anglo 65% Hispanic 15% Indian	3	Federal	State	State	Fed. Indian Ed. & Johnson-O'Malley
NM	Small city; pop. 49,000	11,000 (gradual decline)	35% Anglo 1% Black 63% Hispanic 2% Indian	24	Federal	State	State	Fed. Indian Ed.
OH	Two isolated rural communities; combined pop. 3,000	1,200 (gradual decline)	100% Anglo	3	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---	---
OH	Suburban community; pop. 50,000	9,300 (gradual decline)	67% Anglo 33% Black	18	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	---	ESAA
OH	Urban; pop. 585,000	71,000 (gradual decline)	60% Anglo 40% Black	139	Fed. & State	Fed. & State	Federal	ESAA
WY	Isolated rural county; pop. 22,000	2,900 (rapid growth)	90% Anglo 10% Hispanic	9	Federal	Fed. & State	---*	---
WY	County; pop. 72,000 (small city plus rural areas)	14,000 (rapid growth)	92% Anglo 1% Black 4% Hispanic 3% Other	36	Federal	Fed. & State	---*	---

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*District supports a small ESL tutoring program with general funds.

III STUDENT ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION*

Federal and state resources and requirements associated with categorical programs are intended to ensure that appropriate services are delivered to the target populations. In the 1960s, the main policy issue was whether the federal government could influence the delivery of services at the school level. Since then, federal and state programs have proliferated and policy questions have become more specific. What kinds of instructional services are provided? Are these services reaching the intended target students? Are they appropriate for these students? Do they enhance or detract from the students' overall instructional experiences? In this chapter, we look at the cumulative effects of these programs, across time and across programs, with these questions in mind.

The chapter has three main parts. In the first part, we discuss the access of target students to special services. Next, we describe the appropriateness of the instruction provided by these services, and its relationship to the core instructional program. The third part summarizes ways in which the presence of specialized services within the school influences the regular classroom. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings.

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* The principal author of this chapter is Jane L. David, Bay Area Research Group.

Access to Special Services*

We present our findings related to student access in four sections. First, we describe the nature of the special services. Second, we discuss the major factors influencing the availability of special services within a school. We then describe the factors that influence which students receive the services. Finally, we summarize the influences of federal resources and requirements on the presence of special services and students' access to them.

The Nature of Special Services

Federal and state categorical aid result in identifiable instructional services within funded schools. These special services fall into three broad types, corresponding to the kind of student for which they are intended:

- Compensatory services for "disadvantaged" students
- Special education services for "handicapped" students
- Bilingual or ESL services for "limited English proficient" (LEP) students

Overall, federal (and related state) policies exert considerable influence on the structure and focus of these services. Although instructional content is determined locally, the resources and requirements of government programs have encouraged certain instructional arrangements which have implications for appropriateness and coherence (to be discussed later in the chapter). Because there are important differences in the way federal policies influence services for the disadvantaged, handicapped, and LEP, we describe the three types of services separately below.

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* Throughout this report we use the term "special services" to refer to instructional programs at the service delivery level supported by federal and state categorical programs or mandates. Where pertinent, we refer to the "related" or "support" services that are part of these programs.

Compensatory Services. The most striking feature of the structure of Title I programs is a strong similarity across schools and districts. Districts with Title I funds primarily operate reading programs in the elementary grades (although the specific grade levels vary across sites); elementary math programs are less prevalent. Districts that allocate some Title I money to junior or senior high schools also emphasize reading and math at these levels.

Most elementary Title I programs are offered on a pull-out basis: low-achieving students leave their regular classroom to receive from 20 to 40 minutes a day of small-group instruction from an instructor (generally a teacher, who may be assisted by one or more aides). In secondary schools, instruction is provided either on a pull-out basis (e.g., pull-out to a reading lab during study hall or English) or as an elective class. The pull-out structure tends to be preferred by district staff because it simplifies demonstrating compliance with federal fiscal requirements.

In most districts, all Title I schools offer the same kinds of services because the basic program structure is determined by the district office. In a few districts, program structure varies across schools. Some schools have pull-out programs while others send teachers or aides into the classroom to provide supplementary instruction; the format is determined by individual school principals and their staff. Districts that allow varied formats do not seem to share any characteristic features such as size, district organization, or state policies.

The types of services supported by state compensatory education funds vary across states more than Title I services. In most cases where state support exists, it is used for remedial instruction in reading and math, usually for grade levels or schools not participating in Title I. These services are typically structured like Title I. For example, one state in our sample has a compensatory program explicitly tied to a statewide testing program, and districts use the funds to provide remediation for low-scoring students, through pull-outs in the elementary grades and special reading and math courses at the high school level. In another state, state compensatory funds support instructional aides in selected classrooms. State funds are sometimes used to provide supportive services (e.g., counseling in elementary schools serving disadvantaged students, home/school liaison personnel, or media center staff).

High schools providing services under VEA set-aside funds typically offer separate classes devoted to job readiness.

Special Education. With the exception of New Mexico (which receives no federal funds under P.L.94-142), state and federal funds are not differentiated at the service delivery level. The target population for special education is highly diverse, ranging from students with mild speech impairments to those with multiple physical or mental handicaps. Because federal and state laws require individualized programming for students in special education programs, the types of special education services and the settings in which these services are delivered differ across sites and across students within site. Nevertheless, there are some general patterns in the structure of special education services. Virtually every district uses some combination of pull-out and self-contained modes for delivering instructional services, with specially trained and credentialed staff to provide these services. In addition, districts by and large have established relationships with other districts, agencies, and institutions that serve students requiring residential facilities or provide specialized programs not available within the district.

Typically, children with fairly mild handicaps spend most of the school day in a regular classroom with their nonhandicapped peers. For somewhere between half an hour and 4 hours daily, they are pulled out of the classroom to receive instruction from a credentialed special education teacher. This teacher works with students in small groups (usually no more than six) or individually, in a setting commonly called the "resource room."

Children with more severe handicaps are usually placed in "self-contained" classes, where they spend most or all of the school day with other handicapped children. Self-contained classes are typically much smaller than the average classroom; few have more than 15 students. Self-contained classes are sometimes located in special centralized facilities. However, most districts have decentralized services during the past decade, partly in response to the "least restrictive environment" provision of P.L.94-142; hence the majority of handicapped students attend regular schools.

In some cases, a single self-contained class serves children with diverse handicaps and a fairly broad range in ages. However, many districts group children according to handicap (with, for example, separate classes for mentally retarded, behaviorally disordered, and hearing impaired children), depending primarily on state guidelines. Self-contained classes are usually separate from the resource rooms that serve students on a pull-out basis, with different staff and facilities. Occasionally, the two are combined; resource room staff serve some students for as little as a half hour a day and others for nearly the full day.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Services. Services developed to address the special needs of LEP students generally take one of two forms: ESL instruction and bilingual classes. The choice of approach is influenced by several federal, state, and local factors. For example, two states in our sample have prescriptive bilingual education laws which result in predominantly bilingual approaches. Even in these states, however, some ESL services are offered in response to community pressure, influxes of unusual foreign language groups, presence of multiple foreign language groups, and lack of qualified staff. Title VII grants support bilingual approaches, while the influence of Lau and of Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act funds has been to introduce ESL services.

ESL instruction is usually provided through pull-out programs. It focuses directly on developing students' fluency in oral and written English. In some sites, specialized ESL teachers provide limited instruction in content areas using simplified English-language curriculum materials. In others, virtually all content-area instruction is provided by regular classroom teachers using standard materials, and ESL teachers focus exclusively on vocabulary, grammar, and "survival in the English-only classroom."

Bilingual instruction, on the other hand, is ordinarily conducted in self-contained classes, with an emphasis on maintaining the student's primary language. Instruction in content areas is conducted in the students' primary language as well as English (with the mix of the two languages dependent on a number of factors, including state and district policies, students' English fluency, and the practices and preferences of individual teachers). ESL instruction is often a component of bilingual programs, as is instruction in the students' primary language, culture, and history. Bilingual instruction is typically limited to Spanish.

The Availability of Special Services Within the School

Whether a particular school receives categorical aid depends on a host of local, state and federal factors. Whether a school offers special services depends on whether the district receives or makes available funds (which in turn reflects the characteristics of the student population). Given the availability of funds and the presence of students with special needs, whether a given school offers particular services depends upon district interpretation of federal and state requirements as well as local factors such as availability of facilities and qualified staff.

Availability of Funds. Districts vary in whether or not they receive funds for special services and the amount received. For example, whether or not a school offers compensatory services depends upon the amount of the district Title I allocation, the proportion of economically disadvantaged students (since Title I is usually allocated on the basis of poverty indicators), and the availability of other sources of funds. Other sources include state compensatory funds and the disadvantaged set-aside of the

Vocational Education Act (VEA). Whether a state funds compensatory services reflects its political commitment to disadvantaged students and its financial health. Whether a secondary school receives VEA funds seems to depend primarily on whether the state has provided leadership in this area. Hence, for example, all the districts in our sample in Florida used VEA set-aside funds in this way while in several other states, none did.

Many districts have very few or no LEP students and offer no services. Where state funds for LEP programs are not available, districts with few LEP students sometimes provide services with local funding or through the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act. Whether districts with few LEP students choose to offer a program or not (and whether they use their own funds or seek outside funding) seems to depend primarily upon local perceptions of the severity of the problem (numbers of LEP students) and knowledge of available funds. Most districts with significant numbers of LEP students have obtained Title VII grants at some time in the past which fund services in schools with the largest concentrations of LEP students.

At the school level, distinctions among sources of funding are not made in special education. All districts provide (or arrange for the provision of) special education programs. State funds typically constitute a substantially larger part of a district's special education budget than do federal dollars; in some cases additional support comes from the district's general funds.

Interpretation of Requirements. Given that funds are available for special services, whether or not a particular school receives the funds depends upon district interpretation of federal and state requirements. For example, within a district Title I funds are targeted to schools with high concentrations of low income students. Since school targeting has received considerable attention from Title I auditors, districts have worked out procedures for ranking and selecting eligible schools which follow the rules closely. Districts tend to target Title I funds to elementary schools, reflecting a belief in early intervention as well as recognizing the complications posed by the organization and course requirements of secondary schools. Whether preschool or secondary services are offered does not appear to be associated with any particular state or district characteristics, although some SEAs have explicitly encouraged or discouraged such services at various times.

The same schools tend to receive Title I funds from one year to the next, with the exception of those which have undergone major changes in clientele (as a result of desegregation, for example) and schools that fall near the eligibility cutoff. Whether these conditions lead to changes in funding seems to depend upon district knowledge and use of the federal "grandfathering" clause.*

States with compensatory programs vary in the extent to which their programs are similar to Title I in funding and school eligibility criteria. For example, in California the state compensatory program closely parallels Title I in district and school eligibility. In contrast, Florida's program is targeted to schools based on the number of students who receive low scores on the state assessment.

Whether a particular school offers special education services and the range of services offered depends upon state or district interpretations of federal requirements and upon the availability of space and special facilities. For example, the "least restrictive environment" requirement of PL 94-142 has resulted in state and district policies to decentralize services and thus an increase in services offered at neighborhood schools. Even with a decentralized policy, however, the existence of particular services at a given school depends in part on whether the school already has the special facilities and equipment necessary for those services.

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* This provision in the Title I regulations permitted a district to continue serving a school for up to two years after the school lost its eligibility. It does not appear in the new Chapter I regulations, however.

The existence of a mandatory state program seems to be the strongest determinant of whether a district offers LEP services to most of its LEP students. In our sample, only Massachusetts and California require and provide funding for bilingual programs. As a result, districts with LEP students in these states offer some type of service. The services are generally provided in schools with concentrations of LEP students, although occasionally services are offered in a central location, particularly for short-term intensive ESL services. Even in states with mandatory programs, however, the existence of qualified staff influences whether the services are provided. For example, one district had a recent influx of several hundred Hmong students and has been unable to locate any Hmong-speaking teachers.

Student Eligibility and Access

We have shown above that federal and state resources and requirements result in identifiable services in the intended target schools. We now turn to the question of who receives the special services. Student participation in programs is determined in part by district decisions (e.g., limiting Title I to particular grade levels) and in part by school decisions on eligibility for students. Both district and school decisions are influenced in turn by state and federal eligibility requirements.

It is not possible to define target students a priori and ask whether they are being served. Although federal and state rules provide guidelines and criteria for determining student eligibility, eligibility is ultimately defined locally through district and school interpretation and application of guidelines and criteria. Thus, we investigated how students are selected and local perceptions of whether the "right" students are being served, looking for factors that explain variations across schools and districts in the kinds of students served by the various programs.

First, we look at ways in which districts and schools make decisions about allocating and rationing resources. Second, we discuss at the issue of multiple eligibility--students who meet the eligibility criteria for more than one program. We then look at the ways in which the availability of services influences who receives them. Next, we consider service boundaries and last, how civil rights requirements affect student access to services. Because these topics overlap somewhat and cover a lot of issues, we do not consider each exhaustively and have chosen illustrative examples from particular programs rather than attempting to describe each program under each topic.

Decisions About Resource Allocation. Whether a particular student receives services is influenced in part by district decisions about allocating resources. Since no program provides enough funds to serve all students who might be considered eligible, districts exercise discretion in allocating resources. We have already shown that districts make choices about which schools receive Title I funds, usually choosing to focus on elementary schools. Districts also make choices about which grade levels will be funded. Some districts serve only students in first and second grade, while others serve students in all the elementary grades. As a consequence of restricting services to particular grades, student participation depends upon which grade the student is in.

The considerable variation in which elementary grades are served reflects conscious district decisions about serving a high proportion of students in a few grades (using lower criteria for eligibility) versus serving a smaller proportion of students across more grades (setting higher eligibility criteria). Although states rarely set policies about targeting Title I to particular elementary grades, they sometimes influence district policy through informal pressure (e.g., one state communicates a strong preference for serving the very youngest students) and through the existence of other related policies (e.g., one state funds remedial services in Grades 1-3, hence Title I is usually targeted to Grades 4-6).

In addition to variations in which grades are served, districts vary in eligibility criteria for Title I participation. This variation is reflected in which tests are used, the cutoff score, whether multiple measures are used, and whether measures other than tests are used. For example, one district includes grade retention as one criterion for participation while another explicitly does not serve students who have been retained.

Student participation also depends upon the degree of flexibility with which the eligibility criteria are applied. Even when the criteria are interpreted with some discretion, the rules have been internalized and deviations from them are conscious. For example, a high school compensatory teacher stated:

> I use the regs as guidelines rather than decrees. I have one student who technically shouldn't be with me but both the parents and the counselors requested it. One out of 60 isn't bad.

In spite of (and perhaps because of) considerable variation in grades served and specific criteria for eligibility across districts, district and school staff believe that, on the whole, the intended target students are served. To be sure, there are complaints about the rigidity of cutoff scores in some schools and preferences are sometimes expressed by school and district staff for serving different students. For example, some school staff believe that higher scoring students should be served instead of the very lowest because they believe there is more potential for progress in those who are not the very lowest. Others would choose different grade levels. Nevertheless, school and district staff consistently reported implementation of eligibility criteria and a belief that the intent of the criteria had been met.

Multiply Eligible Students. In every district there are students who meet the eligibility criteria for more than one special service, yet few students actually receive more than one service. This results from a combination of district and school decisions based on judgments about educational soundness and resource allocation. In all types of districts, local staff exercise considerable discretion about which services multiply eligible students will receive. In some cases, this discretion is reflected in formal district (or state) policies and in others it is handled informally by district or school staff.

Two major reasons are given for limiting participation for multiply eligible students. First, participation in more than one service is viewed as educationally unsound because it breaks up the student's instructional program into too many pieces, exacerbating potential problems of fragmentation and lack of coordination. Second, local staff believe limited resources should be spread around rather than focused on a few. In addition, districts and schools may limit participation because they lack qualified staff (e.g., no Spanish speaking special education teachers) or because they fear violating federal prohibitions on supplanting.

District policies limiting program participation for multiply eligible students generally take the form of directing school staff to place students according to their greatest need and to avoid "double service." Whether or not there is a formal policy, school staff make judgments about which service is the most appropriate. The policy of one large district illustrates the formal end of the continuum. Each school has a team headed by the curriculum specialist with representatives from all the special programs in the school. The team meets to consider each student with special needs and selects the program that they feel is most appropriate, with the ground rule that state programs always be considered first (to avoid the possibility of supplanting).

In general, school staff tend to view Title I and special education services as a continuum, with Title I for the least serious cases, the resource room next, and the self-contained classes for the most severely handicapped. Title I is often viewed as a first step; if it proves to be insufficient than a special education placement is considered. However, in districts in which Title I funds are decreasing significantly relative to special education funds, availability of services may determine which service a multiply eligible student will receive. In such districts, once a student is referred to special education, he is unlikely to be considered for Title I. The participation of LEP students in other programs varies by district and school, often resting on judgments about a student's ability to benefit from instruction in English.

In districts in which participation in more than one program is permitted, there still tend to be rules or practices that limit participation in some ways. For example, in one district special education students can receive Title I tutoring but no other Title I services. One district has a policy that prohibits LEP students from participating in Title I until they have completed 2 years of bilingual instruction.

Issues of multiple eligibility for state and federal categorical programs with similar purposes rarely arise because either the students or the types of services differ. For example, in Florida, the state-funded Primary Education Program is targeted to grades K through 3 while Title I serves predominantly students in grades 4 through 6. In Ohio, the state compensatory program funds positions different from those funded by Title I, (such as counselor, media clerk, and other support services), or similar positions for different grade levels (e.g., high school remedial teacher). In Missouri, the state funds support remedial teachers or part of Title I teachers' salaries in order to increase the number of students served.

Availability of Services. The number and type of students judged eligible for services is significantly influenced by the availability of services. For example, in some districts the cutoff score for Title I eligibility is determined post hoc by considering how far the money will spread and setting the cutoff to yield the number of students who can be served. Because there are no sanctions against having eligible Title I students who do not receive services, this is primarily a paper and pencil exercise. In special education, however, the stakes are higher. Since districts can be found out of compliance if identified students are not served, identification in practice is limited to those for whom services can be provided. Hence a potential special education participant is likely to be identified only if the needed services are already offered by the district (or another agency) and if there is space available for the student.

Whether certain LEP students are identified and served also depends on service availability. This is more likely to be a problem for students whose native tongue is other than Spanish and for students in districts with few others of their language group.

Service Boundaries. In any system in which eligibility for services is restricted by established criteria, professional judgments will not always coincide with the results of applying formal criteria. For example, a student may just miss the cutoff score for remedial services or the discrepancy score for learning disabled (LD) services, yet be judged in need of the services. We found that, regardless of how cutoff scores and other eligibility criteria are defined, there are instances of "gray area" students who are technically ineligible but indistinguishable in their need (in the eyes of teachers) from program participants. Whether these students are served depends upon the amount of flexibility allowed or employed in applying the criteria and the availability of spaces in the programs. Since there are typically more students meeting eligibility criteria than available services, "gray area" students often do not receive services.

The boundary between Title I and special education is particularly problematic as are boundaries among various special education services. For example, special education services in a non-Title I school often are quite similar to Title I services in a Title I school. Thus, a student in a non-Title I school might meet the criteria for LD and receive services that a Title I student would receive in another school. Within special education, where labeling is prohibited, some teachers feel that without labels some students receive services less tailored to their needs because a wide range of needs are mixed in a single class. In districts where categories of handicapping conditions are used (informally, if not formally), the opposite criticism is voiced. For example, a special programs psychologist said: "I see a lot of placements made to fit categories in the rule book rather than the students' instructional needs."

Effects of Civil Rights Mandates on Participation. Although we did not study desegregation directly, we observed some effects on student access to special services. In the five large districts in which desegregation involved substantial school reassignments, there were instances of Title I participants transferred to non-Title I schools and hence no longer able to receive the services. This problem was the most severe in the city that implemented its desegregation plan quite recently. Some problems in access to specialized handicapped services also resulted from desegregation. For example, in one district school reassignments disrupted services but the problems did not persist. In another, VEA set-aside services for high school students were adversely affected because the staff, formerly full-time in one building, were spread across several buildings which reduced the intensity of the program. (Analogous problems occurred in some districts without desegregation plans in which special education services had been decentralized.)

Some increases in athletic opportunities for girls and coeducational physical education classes were attributed to Title IX. For example, in one district Title IX provided an opportunity to reassess and upgrade the entire physical education program including a change to coed classes and setting up interdistrict competitions for girls. Effects of Title IX on vocational courses are less evident. In only a few districts, with no particular distinguishing features, was there any evidence of significant participation of boys or girls in courses nontraditional for their sex. Whether Title IX serves to increase access beyond athletics (and even in athletics) seems to depend on the ethos of the community and school board; Title IX provides an incentive when the will is there.

The Role of Federal Resources and Requirements

Across schools and districts, respondents paint a remarkably consistent picture of the impact of federal resources and requirements on student access to special services. Whether or not the respondents share federal program goals, whether or not they favor particular restrictions, they attribute the existence of many services to program funds and their reaching the intended targets to the regulations. As a principal put it:

> There weren't all these programs 15 years ago. Now there are lots of different options for different kinds of kids.

Although the details vary by program and somewhat by district, the overall sense is that many target students would not receive special services without the regulations, especially as resources decline. Typifying this viewpoint, a district administrator noted:

> Categorical programs have value because they target funds and without these requirements the funds become part of a political game and the kids get lost in the shuffle.

Title I often provided the first remedial services to be offered in districts, and in many districts still provides the only compensatory services. In states without compensatory programs of their own, we often heard comments such as: "We wouldn't be able to have remediation if it weren't for federal dollars."

Across districts, respondents at all levels doubt that Title I funds would go to the same schools if there were no targeting rules. Presumably, the funds would either support services in all schools, go into teachers' salaries, or be redirected to the handicapped or the gifted. This viewpoint was expressed by local staff whether or not they were affiliated with the Title I program and was independent of their personal beliefs about targeting based on poverty. As the head of the school board in one large district said:

> Without some restraints the squeaky wheel would get noticed. For example, we have a strong advocacy group for the gifted who would fight for every piece of the pie they could get.

Particularly in states undergoing fiscal retrenchment, district staff described local pressures to "spread the money" to most or all schools rather than to those most heavily impacted by poverty.

Without student targeting and eligibility rules, the same students are not as likely to receive Title I services. But which students would be served varies considerably. For example, in some schools the principals would provide Title I funded services to all students. In others, more students would be served in larger groups. In still others, students with the lowest test scores (those "most in need") would not be served in order to serve slightly higher scoring students. Such variation in preferences and reasons cannot be classified neatly by school or district factors; rather they tend to reflect individual preferences of school staff.

Because special education services predated federal involvement, the existence of a range of services and settings in districts is not solely attributable to P.L.94-142. The primary influence of P.L.94-142 is observable in improved procedures for identifying and placing students, the expansion of services (vertically, to secondary school students, and horizontally, to include related services), and the decentralization of services. In general, however, there has been an increase in the range and types of services offered to handicapped students some of which can be attributed to P.L.94-142. As one special education director phrased it:

> P.L.94-142 made us search for kids who fell through the cracks or never came in the front door.

Most districts are sensitive to the special needs of handicapped students and, having provided services in the past, would continue to provide some special education services in the future, even in the absence of federal and state mandates. However, some respondents, most frequently those involved in special education, felt the rules were important. As one special education director put it:

> The federal and state handicapped requirements and mandates make certain that special education students get a fair share of the pie.

On the other hand, in some districts, particularly in states with declining resources, respondents felt that special education services were absorbing too much money and would be reduced if the regulations and funding were curtailed.

It is difficult to generalize about the impact of the federal role in the provision of LEP services. Clearly, some LEP services exist as a result of Title VII and Indochinese Refugee Assistance Act funds, while others can be traced to state mandates and funds. Moreover, some state and local programs were modeled after former Title VII programs. Although federal mandates have not had a large impact on districts in states that lack their own mandates, Lau acted as an impetus for serving some LEP students who had previously gone unnoticed. In a state that permits but does not mandate LEP services, an assistant superintendent in a district of more than 50,000 students stated:

> Take the 500 LEP students. Who'll represent them? Unless the law forces us to consider them, they may get nothing.

The Quality and Coherence of Target Group Instruction

We have demonstrated that federal resources and requirements play a major role in increasing target students' access to identifiable services within the school. In this part, we report on issues related to instruction. First, we consider the appropriateness of instruction provided in special programs, and second we look at the coherence of the overall instructional program of target students. Because we neither observed instruction nor measured outcomes, our data on instructional matters consist primarily of the professional judgments of teachers. Finally, we summarize teachers' assessments of the educational trade-offs involved in program participation.

The Instructional Appropriateness of Specialized Services

To determine whether the instruction provided in the special programs is appropriate for participating students, we sought the judgments of respondents, particularly regular classrooms teachers. Their professional judgments contrasted special instructional services with the instruction the student would have received in their classrooms if there were no such services. The relationship between these services and the participating students' core instructional program is considered in the following section.

In general, teachers and administrators expressed positive judgments about the services being delivered by federal and/or state programs. The most common expression of this was that the students were getting far more individual attention and materials tailored to their needs than they would get in the regular classroom. There was widespread agreement that special-needs students require extra attention that just cannot be provided in the average-sized class taught by a single teacher.

Individual teacher judgments of appropriateness were strongly colored by their perceptions of the quality of the special teachers. When specialists were viewed as less than competent, the appropriateness of their instruction was questioned. But these instances were relatively rare. Our evidence suggests that the quality of special staff has improved over time for two reasons. First, when categorical programs were growing rapidly, some slots were filled with poorly qualified applicants, often reflecting a lack of district commitment to the programs. An elementary principal, for example, reflecting on the history of Title I in his district noted that:

> In the past, federal money here went to all black schools. Initially, they didn't pick the best people for those jobs.

The second reason for improvement in special staff quality is increased experience and training, both preservice and inservice. For example, a district special education respondent noted:

> Our EMR teachers are now better trained so they don't need so much support.

Hence, local and state requirements for training, combined with slackened growth in the programs, have contributed to the improved quality of special staff.

There is some variation in perceptions of the appropriateness of instruction in special programs by program type. For example, classroom teachers rarely feel qualified to handle non-English-speaking students or students with severe handicaps, hence they are likely to view special instruction as appropriate for these types of students. On the other hand, some teachers believe they could do as good a job as the specialists with Title I and some learning disabled students, if they had smaller classes. However, these teachers view such a trend as highly unlikely and, in fact, expect their class size to increase.

The views expressed by regular teachers regarding instruction provided by Title I were consistently positive. As one teacher stated:

> Without the special services, these children would spend two years at each grade level.

Teachers cited effects on learning as well as social development, illustrated by these comments from two teachers:

> If federal programs were to be cut in schools such as ours, children would not get the same kind of pushing and drill that the Title I teacher gives. I like to know that my children understand what's going on and the Title I drill embeds it.
>
> When you pull children into a constructive Title I program, you are easing the frustration they feel in the classroom because they are low achievers. Title I gives the child work that he can feel he is mastering. It may not be grade level work, but it gives the child a better attitude toward himself and others. Federal funds are not being wasted.

On the negative side, teachers occasionally felt that appropriateness was limited by lack of flexibility in moving students in and out of compensatory programs during the year. For example, some students have problems with a few skill areas but not others and benefit from specialized instruction only in these areas. These comments tended to occur in schools in which "graduation" criteria were rigidly adhered to and in which there was limited communication between the regular teacher and the compensatory teacher. In other schools, teachers were permitted to move students in and out of the program during the year based on results of skills tests. Teachers at such schools valued the flexibility. Classroom teachers seemed less familiar with the content of special education services than Title I services, but generally felt that the services were important--something they couldn't provide. As one teacher put it:

> Without more training, more money and more materials we would be expected to handle these children. And we would do it... we would cope. But children would not get as good services simply because of the body count--the number of kids. Materials don't mean a lot; children need extra attention and contact.

Where criticisms were voiced, they often reflected judgments about the approach used in the special classes. For example, one teacher stated:

> I don't see that the EH program has helped the kid... they are given too much freedom and rewarded for behavior problems.

Such comments were the exception, however; in part, perhaps because of lack of knowledge about instruction in special education classes.

The trend towards decentralizing special education services was generally credited with increasing instructional appropriateness as well as providing social benefits:

> I used to teach at the special education school. We used old textbooks that no one wanted anymore, and some of the teachers were incompetent. Decentralization made special education much more visible in the district. It's meant that we have better materials now. And the marginal teachers learned that they couldn't make it in the regular system, so they left.

And a principal noted:

> It's better for these children not to have to leave their own neighborhood and their friends.

In sites with state or federally funded services to LEP students, the need for some special instruction was not questioned, but the approach was. For example, in sites in which LEP students received "bilingual" as opposed to ESL instruction and much of the community were first-or second-generation Americans, there were questions about the appropriateness of a bilingual approach (as opposed to an ESL immersion approach). Critics felt that self-contained bilingual classes were not an efficient way to learn English. As one high school bilingual teacher put it:

> Being together all the time, they speak Spanish in the hallways and in the cafeteria. They go to other classes where the subject matter is taught in Spanish. Forty-five minutes a day of English instruction is like learning a foreign language. I've been a foreign language teacher, and I know pupils don't communicate in the language. I'd like to see a crash program in English for the students.

In another district with a bilingual program, a high school principal stated:

> People who want to live in this country ought to be required to learn English. Students should get full-time ESL until they're able to function in a regular class.

These criticisms generally did not apply to programs in New Mexico and Louisiana where the bulk of state-funded bilingual instruction is designed to teach a language other than English or preserve cultural heritage. Nor did such criticisms apply to ESL pull-out instruction:

> I'm grateful for whatever ESL help these children get. It's oriented toward survival skills--helping them learn to function in the classroom. They miss some classroom work, but most of the material is too hard for them anyway. It's definitely worth it because the ESL program speeds up their integration into the classroom.

In spite of some variation across and within programs, reflecting differences in the perceived quality of the specialists and in support for the orientation of the special services, special services were judged on the whole to be more appropriate for participating students than what they would receive in the regular classroom.

The Coherence of the Target Student's Overall Instructional Program

The fact that students are pulled out of their regular classroom means that they are missing something they would otherwise receive, that they are physically moving from one setting to another, and that they are receiving instruction from two or more teachers instead of a single classroom teacher. Each of these conditions has the potential to detract from the target students' overall instructional program. Such negative consequences are commonly referred to as "program fragmentation," with the connotation that a fragmented program is incomplete, uncoordinated, or otherwise disjointed. We investigated the extent to which local staff, particularly teachers, perceive the overall instructional program of target students to be fragmented as a result of receiving special services.

Across schools and districts, respondents cited serious problems of program fragmentation in the past, steps taken to minimize the problems, and, as a result of these steps, noticeable improvements. There are still instances of fragmentation--a few serious and many minor--but the overwhelmingly consistent pattern is one of problems having been alleviated over time. Below we discuss fragmentation in terms of what is missed in the regular classroom, problems of disruption, and coordination of content between regular and special instruction.

Something Missed. The concept of "nonsupplanting" is an ideal which can never be fully realized in practice. Any time a student receives specialized instruction during the school day, he is missing something. Nevertheless, the goal of nonsupplanting is well understood by local staff and is translated into efforts to ensure that what the student misses is of less instructional value than what the student receives in the special program. Typically, this is accomplished by scheduling the pull-out instruction to coincide with seatwork time in the regular classroom--time during which the target student is unlikely to receive much instruction. Whether or not classroom teachers view what is missed as having equal or greater value than the special services depends upon involvement of the classroom teachers in arranging the schedule and their perceptions of the quality of the special instruction.

Classroom teachers generally indicated increased involvement in scheduling, resulting in, for example, all Title I students being pulled out at the same time during seatwork that could easily be made up later. In many schools, special program staff had put considerable effort into working out scheduling arrangements with each classroom teacher to ensure that interruption of the students' schedule (as well as the teachers') would be minimized. As one teacher put it:

> At one time Title I was disruptive and fragmented... In the last 2 years, things have improved. The Title I teacher now takes a whole group for an hour. She is working with a smaller number of students and can really help them.

Combined with their perceptions that special services are more appropriate, classroom teachers typically conclude that what is gained exceeds what is lost. Their judgments are typified by the following remark from a classroom teacher:

> They may be losing something when they are pulled out, but they are often lost in the regular classroom. The tradeoff is being exposed to what is going on in the regular class versus getting special help. I tend to think the special help is worth it.

The exceptions to this finding were most often expressed by fifth and sixth grade teachers who cover more subject areas during the day than do lower grade teachers. Hence, there were instances in which students missed social studies or science which was viewed as a loss, even when teachers believed that target students were benefitting more from the special instruction than they would from social studies or science.

Disruption. Whether or not teachers feel that target students are unduly disrupted by pull-out programs depends primarily upon the number of pull-outs for a given student and the teachers' perception of the need for stability and how that is best achieved. Although schools in most districts had students with problems caused by multiple pull-outs in the past, in only a few schools is this still a problem. (See the discussion of multiple eligibility.) These schools share the characteristic that a variety of activities are conducted on a pull-out basis in addition to federal and state programs. In fact, for a given student, most of the pull-out programs in which he or she participates are local activities such as band, cheerleading, art, athletics, and cafeteria duty. Typically, this occurs in schools in very small rural districts in which all students ride buses and therefore cannot stay after school for such activities. Occasionally, respondents expressed concern that program participants had their program disrupted simply by virtue of changing rooms. These respondents share the belief that stability is important and that this requires one class and one teacher. As one teacher said:

> I'm from the old school. If we could lower the pupil/teacher ratio and put a regular teacher in, kids would be better off--they need the consistency of the same teacher every day.

This viewpoint was the exception rather than the rule and tended to be voiced in schools with a variety of pull-out activities.

Coordination of Content. The degree to which the instructional content of special services is coordinated with that of the regular classroom depends on the amount of communication between special and classroom staff and the difference in difficulty level of the content. Coordination also varies by program type. For example, coordination is far more common with compensatory services than with special education or bilingual services. This distinction seems to rest on the perception that the content or remediation should be dictated by the classroom teacher whereas special and bilingual education are the bailiwick of specialists.

In response to problems of content coordination, and the impetus of the 1978 Education Amendments and IEP requirements of P.L.94-142, most districts have taken steps to increase the coordination of content between regular and special instructional programs. These steps range from organizational changes at the district level to requirements for recordkeeping for school staff. The following examples from different LEAs illustrate the range of actions designed to increase coordination:

- Changing the location of the special programs in the district organization. This usually takes the form of placing compensatory and special education with the regular instructional program, reporting to the same assistant or deputy superintendent instead of being in a separate part of the organization.
- Requiring that special program staff be involved in district meetings concerning curriculum, planning, and staff development.
- Developing mechanisms for communication within schools. For example, requiring the use of "communication sheets" on which classroom teachers record the skills and objectives to be covered by the special teacher.
- Coordinating materials and textbooks between classroom and special programs. For example, ensuring that texts used in LD and Title I classes are compatible with the regular classroom basal reading text.

Although district actions provide an impetus for coordinating instruction, such coordination ultimately rests with school staff and depends on the abilities of individual teachers to develop close working relationships. Where close relationships exist, they were often initiated by the special program staff who made it their business to know what was going on in the regular classroom. For example, one teacher said:

> The Title I reading teacher knows exactly what the kids are doing in my room. It's almost a team teaching arrangement...

School factors, such as a principal committed to coordination or a tradition of open communication among staff, also facilitate these relationships.

Coordination was more common for compensatory services because these services were often viewed by classroom and special staff as remediation for specific skills taught in the regular classroom. Moreover, students in special education and LEP classes are more likely to be considerably behind the leve [illegible] the regular classroom, which makes coordination of content much more difficult. Even in compensatory programs, special teachers noted the difficulty of coordinating content for students unable to keep up in the regular classroom.

Educational Trade-offs in Target Group Instruction

District and school staff recognize that the existence of special services poses certain trade-offs. For a student to receive more individual attention and appropriate instruction from a special instructor, he/she must miss something in the regular class and lose the stability of a single classroom and teacher. Whether the benefits are perceived to outweigh the costs depends upon the quality of the special service, the degree to which the student can benefit from the instruction in the regular classroom, and the available alternatives. Our respondents did not have other models for the delivery of special services with which to compare the categorical structure. Therefore, their frame of reference was what the student's instruction program would be without the special services. As the section on appropriateness demonstrates, with this frame of reference, teachers generally perceive the benefits of the special services to outweigh the costs.

Influences on the Regular Classroom

The special services could affect not only the target students but also those remaining in the regular classroom. We sought evidence about positive effects, such as smaller regular classes, and negative effects, such as interruption of the regular classroom. Many of the larger effects of programs on the regular classroom were sufficiently indirect or taken for granted that few respondents mentioned them. (Classroom teachers, in particular, are unaccustomed to thinking about program effects on anyone other than the participants). For example, merely thinking in terms of special needs and conducting needs assessments and evaluations for a variety of purposes is now taken for granted in all districts--concepts that were originally introduced by Title I (see Chapter IV). This was suggested by the few exceptions in which respondents cited sweeping impacts, most of which were initially felt years ago. For example, one superintendent stated:

> There's one thing Title I taught us: you can't write off any kid. If there was any lingering doubt about whether a poor kid had the ability, Title I torpedoed that.

Another respondent noted that, as a result of federal civil rights mandates, the content of textbooks have changed dramatically over the past 15 years. Now most textbooks have pictures that are no longer just of white people and many present role models that are less stereotyped by race and by sex than in the past. Further, one respondent suggested that the plethora of remedial materials now available was motivated by Title I. Another suggested that federal attention to special needs students had watered down the regular curriculum.

Clearly, effects of this magnitude cannot be solely attributed to federal programs; other factors such as general social trends and new markets created or sought after by textbook publishers contributed to these changes. It would take a study devoted primarily to this topic to do a thorough job of documenting such types of program impacts and the contributing factors. Nevertheless, by inference from other topics (such as discussions of pull-out programs) and from direct questioning, we were able to construct a picture of more immediate effects of special programs on the regular classroom. We discuss the findings first from the perspective of school staff and then from the district perspective.

School Perspectives

At the school level, classroom teachers cited both positive and negative effects on their classrooms but these effects, though widespread, were not deemed of major importance on the whole. The effects most commonly cited were those pertaining to the impact of pull-out programs. Although a few respondents cited interruption of the regular classroom as a cost, the predominant response was one of benefits, albeit small, because there were fewer students in the class and because the more disruptive or slow students were out of the class. With program participants out of the room, more attention could be paid to the nonparticipants. As one regular teacher put it:

> The classes are smaller when they (program participants) are gone. If I used it better, it might make a difference in favor of regulars but I'm just getting the hang of it.

Teachers who cited disruption caused by pull-outs tended to be in schools with very high proportions of target students and described the time and effort devoted to scheduling at the beginning of each school year as the major problem.

Respondents also mentioned benefits from materials that wouldn't be available without the programs. Although use of program materials is usually restricted to program participants, there was considerable informal sharing of materials and ideas between specialists and regular teachers. As a regular teacher said, with reference to the Title I teacher:

> We communicate almost daily about problems with a kid. She gives me ideas; we compare notes. Sometimes I give her ideas.

A few of their comments suggested misuse of Title I materials (in violation of the general aid prohibition), but most were legitimate cases. For example, some principals noted that Title I brought certain materials to their attention which they then ordered for the entire school.

Regular classrooms are directly affected by the presence of aides supported by categorical funds. Classroom teachers who have aides generally regard them as an asset and, where aides had been around for a long time, teachers have come to depend on them and could not imagine what they would do without them. Aides are given varying degrees of responsibility for actual instruction depending on local program design, the imagination and flexibility of supervising teachers, and the perceived quality and skills of the aides themselves (which vary tremendously). Making good use of an aide requires management skills which also vary considerably across teachers. As one teacher summarized a common view of aides: "There is nothing better than a good aide and nothing worse than a bad one."

Mainstreaming of handicapped students also has a direct impact on the regular classroom. We encountered few instances of mainstreaming in academic classes; where it occurred, teachers attributed both costs and benefits to the practice. The costs were additional attention to mainstreamed students at the expense of the other students. The benefits were in terms of the regular students, for example;

> Handicapped students are an asset in the classroom. They have courage and determination. It's an example for the others.

Finally, in a very few schools, there were clear benefits to nonparticipants by virtue of using program resources for general aid. In schools which are experiencing declining base support and have large state and federal program budgets ($300,000 to $400,000), we noted a tendency to use program funds to replace services that the district was no longer funding, such as a counselor.

District Perspectives

LEA respondents brought a different perspective to the influence of special programs on the regular classroom, citing both positive and negative effects. The positive effects were primarily examples of adopting ideas and practices from special programs for broader purposes. The negative effects were primarily stories of encroachment on the regular budget from the full service mandate of P.L.94-142. On the positive side, in one district, the reading curriculum was originally developed in the Title I program and was subsequently adopted by the district for all students. Respondents in a few districts cited general improvements in diagnostic and evaluation practices for all students which were modeled after practices in Title I and special education. In some districts, federal programs were cited as bringing about training opportunities for classroom teachers that would not otherwise have existed, such as how to identify certain types of learning problems and human relations training. In one district, an education service center was built with Model Cities money after the idea was borrowed from Title I.

The largest negative impacts cited by district staff concerned encroachment on the regular budget from special education. In districts with declining resources, respondents felt that special education services were absorbing too much money. With the exception of districts in Massachusetts and California, respondents did not cite evidence of regular funds being directed to special education, although such encroachment was feared if the mandates remain and funds decrease. In Massachusetts and California, both states with strong special education mandates and significant reductions in base funding as a result of revenue limits, respondents did cite specific examples of encroachment, either in terms of dollars or cuts in the regular program (e.g., reducing the number of classroom aides, small increases in class size). Other negative effects cited by the district staff were far less dramatic. For example, in districts in which Title I comparability is interpreted rigidly, district staff felt they were limited in the number of enrichment services they could provide to non-Title I schools.

This section provides only one perspective on the ways in which special programs have affected the regular classroom, limited by examples cited by respondents. Both Chapters IV and V provide considerably more evidence on this topic through analyzing ways in which schools and districts have changed as a result of federal and state programs and mandates.

Summary

The following points summarize the main findings presented in this chapter:

(1) The existence of special services and student access to them has resulted from federal resources and requirements. In particular, federal and state categorical aid targeted to disadvantaged, handicapped, and LEP students has been translated into identifiable services for these groups.

(2) Districts direct the resources to the intended schools and students; however, not all potentially eligible students are served because districts:

- Lack sufficient funds
- Concentrate services on particular schools (usually elementary) and particular grades levels
- Limit program participation for multiply eligible students to minimize fragmentation and spread resources
- Trade off goals that require concentrating students in one school (for instructional efficiency) with goals that require dispersing students across several schools (for desegregation and less restrictive environments).

(3) Within the bounds established by federal and state requirements and guidelines, local decisions ultimately determine who is eligible for special services. Despite considerable variation in grades served, specific criteria for eligibility, and the flexibility with which they are applied, local educators believe that, on the whole, the intended target students are served.

(4) Without federal and state rules that target services to certain schools and students, the same students would not be as likely to receive these services.

(5) Local staff generally judge special services to be instructionally appropriate because students receive far more individual attention and materials tailored to their needs than they would in the regular classroom.

(6) Fragmentation of target students' overall instructional program has been minimized through local efforts to limit participation in pull-out programs, schedule carefully, and coordinate instructional content where possible. Nevertheless, some stability and exposure to the core program is sacrificed for more individual attention--a trade-off generally judged "worth it" by local staff.

(7) Classroom teachers generally report small effects of special services on their classrooms including some disruption from pull-outs and some benefits from the removal of "difficult to teach students."

(8) More pervasive impacts of special services on regular classrooms include, on the positive side, the adoption of new ideas and practices; and, on the negative side, fewer resources due to encroachment of special education on the regular budget (where the regular budget is decreasing).

IV SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION*

In this chapter, we shift perspective from the instruction target students receive to the organization that provides it (the school) and the higher-level agency (the LEA) that coordinates and supports school activities. As Chapter III has implied, the presence of government-supported or mandated services has changed many aspects of school and LEA organization, in both intended and unintended ways. In this chapter we address the nature and extent of the changes, the factors that account for them (with special attention to the role of federal policies), and the effect of the changes on the ability of school or LEA to fulfill its educational mission.

The chapter is organized in four parts. First, we discuss cumulative effects on school structure and staffing, and their implications for interstaff relations and individual teaching roles. We then describe parallel effects and implications at the district level. Third, we discuss influences on instructional management functions (planning, needs assessment, and evaluation) at both the student and district levels. Finally, we consider the demands on staff time resulting directly from federal requirements and indirectly from the presence of special services in the school and LEA.

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School Structure and Staffing

Because federal aid to schools is largely an investment in people, it is particularly important to understand the kinds of people brought into the school building and what their presence means for the functioning of the school. What types of position do they fill and how do these differ from existing staff positions? How do the special program staff fit in? How does their presence change the structure of the school, the climate of relationships among staff, or the roles of individual teachers? Ultimately, how do they enhance or inhibit the functioning of the school?

We present our answers to these questions below under three topics. First, we describe the new positions and people whose presence in elementary and secondary schools could be attributed to federal funds, requirements, and mandates. We then consider the consequences of new positions and people for interstaff relations and communication. Finally, we examine implications for the role of the classroom teacher.

New Positions and People

The effects of federal funds, mandates, and associated requirements on school staffing are especially obvious at the elementary level, but also evident in secondary schools. At each level, we found staff in positions with specialized assignments related to services for target students. With few exceptions, the presence of these positions and the diversity of people filling them result directly or indirectly from federal and parallel state policies. Collectively, the staff in these positions have expanded the instructional and administrative repertoire of most schools we visited.

We found, varying with school and district characteristics, one or more of four role categories: specialists, mid-level managers (school-based), para-professionals, and support service providers. Each type not only augments overall staff capabilities but also alters the school hierarchy. The new positions can be described as follows:

- Specialists are teachers who spend most of their time instructing target students in groups of varying size.* Remedial specialists teach reading and math, usually in small-group pull-out settings. Resource room teachers manage the instruction of a range of mildly handicapped students for varying portions of the day. Teachers in self-contained classrooms work with groups of more severely handicapped or LEP students. Other teachers (often itinerant, assigned to several schools) work one-on-one with students having learning disabilities or lacking English proficiency. Organizationally, such teachers join the roster of teachers as equal members of the school faculty, but are often linked to a particular grade, cluster, or even form their own separate unit (e.g., the special education department in many high schools).

- Mid-level managerial positions, variously termed "program manager," "resource teacher," or "curriculum coordinator," occur within many elementary schools and are responsible for administering the special services in the building, coordinating them (with each other and with the regular program), and providing instructional support (materials, supervision). This position adds a new hierarchical level to an otherwise flat organizational structure.

- Paraprofessional aides provide instructional back-up to specialists or classroom teachers, perform clerical tasks, or both. Aides generally do not have extensive training for what they do, and have learned most of it on the job. Aides, too, expand the school hierarchy, by virtue of their position subordinate to one or more supervising teachers.

- Support service providers--school-community liaison personnel, counselors, social workers, vocationally oriented staff at secondary level--combine direct service to target students with other kinds of assistance. Because these staff are often only part-time in a given school building, due to the nature of their work or assignment to several school buildings, they generally occupy a more peripheral position, e.g., as an adjunct to the principal or guidance officer.

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* Staff supported by categorical funds are not the only "specialists"; there are various locally funded staff such as art and music teachers at the elementary level and vocational counselors in high schools performing functions for the student body as a whole.

The above positions are "specialized" in two senses. First, with the exception of some paraprofessionals, those holding such positions come to their assignments with a specialized set of skills, developed through prior training, experience, background (e.g., knowledge of the community, language fluency), or a combination of all three. Second, their assignments are generally focused on a more restricted range of tasks than regular staff roles--reading remediation as opposed to reading and language arts instruction, bilingual counseling as opposed to general guidance and counseling.

These types of positions are virtually all supported by federal or state categorical funds and, in the case of special education and many bilingual positions, their presence in the school district is mandated as well. Furthermore, except in the wealthiest districts, few such positions are--or would be--supported by local funds. (Title I staff dropped due to federal cutbacks in 1981 were generally not retained on local funding, despite a high opinion of their contribution to their schools.)

The people who fill these positions are diverse and have broadened the composition of school faculties. In districts with a heterogeneous student population they are more likely than regular staff to reflect the racial, ethnic, and language background of target students. In districts with little staff turnover, they are often younger. Paraprofessional positions have brought adult members from the respective target communities into many schools. Except where staffing decisions are a direct response to affirmative action mandates, diversity is not directly attributable to federal policies (hiring decisions and labor market dynamics are, after all, local matters) but is clearly encouraged by the nature of the special programs and their clientele.

The actual mix and number of new positions and people in a given school depend on a number of factors. The principal ones are the size of the school, the numbers and diversity of special-needs students, and the level of federal and state funding targeted to their needs. Other factors (described in Chapter III) that determine the presence of particular services in the school obviously affect the mix and number of staff: the level of the school, state decisions, local allocation or program design decisions, and idiosyncratic factors. As a result of all these factors, categorically supported or mandated staff can constitute a large proportion of the school staff, for example, half or more of the staff in a typical heavily impacted school in a state with substantial categorical funding. By contrast, schools in the same district with fewer special-needs students or in other states might have only a remedial teacher or two and a learning disabilities tutor.

What differences does the array of specialized staff make to schools? Although opinions about the value of specialization vary (especially at the elementary level), respondents consistently acknowledged the following kinds of benefits:

- Providing scarce skills and expertise: Depending on the background and training of the specialist, he/she can bring new skills to the building. For example, in one inner city elementary school with 35% Hispanic students, a bilingual aide was the only one who spoke Spanish; in a small rural high school, the instructor of severely handicapped students brought to her school particular expertise in working with such students. Typical cases were somewhat less dramatic, such as a remedial reading teacher with considerable experience in handling upper elementary reading problems.

- Reducing the heterogeneity in the regular classroom:* Many classroom teachers told us that the ability to send students with time-consuming learning problems to specialists enabled them to teach the remainder more effectively (see discussion of influences on the regular classroom in Chapter III).

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* Note: Federal policies have also contributed in some cases to more heterogeneous classrooms, as a result of desegregation and the mainstreaming of handicapped students.

- Providing an escape valve for disruptive students: School administrators appreciated having extra staff to cope with disruptive students (who often fell in one or another target group). The principal of an inner city elementary school commented about a particular disadvantaged youngster:

  > You know I just don't know what to do with that kid sometimes. He's just out of control a lot of the time, and in my office, too, a lot of the time. The Title I lady picks him up one-on-one for an hour a day but he needs more. We haven't yet been able to arrange a special ed placement for him.

- Administrative trouble-shooting: Resource teachers, counselors, and others often take on responsibility for administrative chores and crisis management, even to the point of functioning like an unofficial assistant principal. A high school community liaison staff member was described as follows:

  > He does a lot of things that never show up in reports. He reports to the principal. If there's an irate parent, he'll talk to them. If there are outsiders in the building, he'll check it out--he heads off most things before they even start.

In these ways, the people brought to the school under federal (and state) support or mandate make the school staff as a whole more versatile, at least in principle. They generally expand the school's "repertoire" for dealing with a wide range of student needs and associated administrative problems.

While the presence of new people and positions makes the school's staff more versatile, it also increases the complexity of school organization. This has ramifications for interstaff relations and classroom teaching roles.

Interstaff Relations and Communication

It is commonly asserted that the introduction of federal programs intensifies staff conflict and strains communication, thereby complicating the coordination of instruction. But at the time of our site visits, as noted in Chapter III, instructional coordination problems were not considered to be particularly serious or unmanageable in most schools, even those that were heavily impacted.

We explored this unexpected finding further by inquiring about three aspects of the relationship between special program staff and core staff: the incidence and sources of overt friction or professional rivalry, the isolation of special staff from other faculty, and the growth of mutually supportive relationships between special and core staff. We found that, while clearly complicating staff relations initially, the presence of specialists in the school is a problem that is largely within the power of school administrators to solve. In many cases, the problem has been resolved; in others, the failure is largely attributable to school and district factors. Federal policies have contributed to the initial problem, by introducing new types of staff and restricting their interaction with others, but also to its solution, through sustained financial support and policy adjustments.

We heard some comments about professional rivalry and friction in every district we visited and in most schools, but, on closer examination, such complaints usually described the relationship between a particular pair of teachers rather than the characteristic relationship between special and core staff within the school. Certain classroom teachers resent the smaller class sizes, larger budgets for materials, or extra planning time enjoyed by specialists. Others complain that specialists don't have to work as hard and couldn't handle a regular classroom. Still others gripe about the status of specialists, whose jobs are often protected by federal or state mandates and associated court orders. Some specialists also complain--about resistance from core staff (e.g., to mainstreaming), lack of cooperation (e.g., in scheduling pull-out classes), or competition for students (e.g., from teachers unwilling to refer students for special services).

Individual factors often accounted for these sentiments: some respondents complain indiscriminantly about everything; others simply don't believe in the instructional approach of a special service or perceive a particular specialist to be incompetent. In such cases, the same complaint was typically judged by other staff to be a non-issue or to be relatively trivial. Alternatively, evidence from other sources pointed to good working relationships among staff and at least a modicum of mutual respect. But in some of the schools we visited, the signs of friction between special and core staff are particularly visible and widespread.

Schools with better working relations between specialists and core staff appear to differ from schools with staff strife as follows:

- Specialist Initiative. Where specialists extend themselves to be part of the school staff and do not treat their differences as privileges, there is little difficulty. An inner-city Title I reading teacher commented:

  > If you're conscientious, and don't abuse or flaunt your position, you don't have problems.

  There is considerable evidence that specialists have to go more than half way, to bridge any potential gaps between them and the classroom staff, particularly when new to a building. A county consultant in one rural site noted, about the way special education services were received:

  > It's gotten much better, as long as we go the extra mile. We have to make contact, do a little extra work. Then we get cooperation.

- Principal Leadership. The principal's actions set a tone that either encourages staff harmony or inhibits it (even by default). One inner-city high school principal illustrates this. By minimizing apparent differences in assignments, he maintained staff harmony:

  > Most [of my special staff] do a duty period like the others. That's district policy and that's also the way I like it. It keeps people in line. Some years back, we had a [specially funded] counselor who spent three periods a day in the lounge; that was damaging to morale.

- District Policies. District policies contribute, though more indirectly, to positive staff climate (e.g., in those districts that actively encourage curricular coordination between classroom and Title I reading teachers) or to disharmony (e.g., where restrictions on materials access are strictly observed and carefully monitored).

- Staff Cohesiveness. In schools reported to have a climate of cohesiveness among its staff, problems in the relationship between special and regular staff are minimal or absent. Conversely, widespread disharmony is almost always symptomatic of a more general malaise among staff that can be detected almost as soon as one enters the school.

- Longevity. Schools in which special services have a long history are unlikely to show signs of widespread staff disharmony, especially if the same specialists have been around for a long time. By contrast, recent arrivals often note trouble becoming integrated into the school's staff.

Other site characteristics such as the size of the school and the number of special programs within it can affect staff relations but seem less consistently important. We found, for instance, that some large schools with many special services exhibited greater staff harmony than the average while some small, lightly impacted schools were riddled with staff dissension.

Isolation of specialists from regular staff appears to be more widespread than overt friction, but in most schools it is either not viewed as a significant problem or is minimized by the factors just described.

Isolation is not always a "problem" that requires solution. The traditions of the profession and the prevailing organization of most schools tend to isolate all teachers from one another to some extent. Furthermore, certain kinds of special staff are more likely to be isolated, such as teachers of self-contained classrooms for more severely handicapped students or LEP students in full-day bilingual programs. For such services, which are by nature "substantially separate" (and so named in one state's special education law), some degree of isolation is to be expected. Itinerant staff of all kinds are also likely to feel isolated, for obvious structural reasons. Isolation becomes an issue only when specialists and classroom teachers share the same students and need to communicate with each other about them.

If specialized staff increased the potential for interstaff friction or isolation, they also provided a potential resource. We found evidence in all types of schools that the presence of specialists provides a source of advice, ideas, and assistance to many classroom teachers. As far as we could determine, mutually supportive relationships happen gradually and informally in the way that relationships develop among any school staff members--an occasional conversation about a particular learning problem, a visit to check over a colleagues's reading series, and so on. The difference is that competent specialists have a "bag of tricks" that others don't.

Federal policies have contributed both to problems of interstaff relations and to their solution. Initially, the presence of new staff and the requirements governing their work have intruded on existing staff communication patterns and beliefs. Principals and teachers indicated that negotiating schedules and room assignments can become complicated. Across various sites, some federal requirements (such as the former prohibition on Title I teachers' noninstructional duties and restrictions on access to their special program materials) have exacerbated differences between specialists and core staff, as have some state-level requirements (e.g., class-size restrictions for special education or compensatory services). Other provisions intrude on core staff more directly, such as the "least restrictive environment" provision of P.L. 94-142 that encourages the introduction of handicapped children into the school building and into regular classrooms. Elaborate procedures for referring students for special help (discussed later in this chapter) are an additional source of friction. Any such requirements make the natural integration of new staff into the building more difficult.

The resentments associated with these policies have apparently been widespread, but on the whole temporary. Two things appear to happen over time. First, in some cases, federal policies (e.g., Title I restrictions on noninstructional duties or access to materials) have changed or have been monitored more loosely, thus encouraging more flexible interpretation at the local level. Second, sustained support by federal and state sources has enabled a process of gradual accommodation. Over time, school staff have adjusted to specialists and have developed more comfortable relationships with them.

Change in staff resistance to mainstreaming is a case in point. Across different types of sites, teachers seem to have come to understand and accept the rationale for this activity. At the same time, specialists have learned to place students more carefully and approach receiving teachers more cautiously, while gradually building a base of support among more receptive staff. A high school occupational/special education coordinator (formerly head of special education in this school) captured the dynamic over time this way:

> There have been changes in the regular teachers' perceptions. There's a fear of the unknown in regular classrooms. But on average, by now, almost everyone has had one of my kids. After the first encounter, it generally seems easier. Now it's not a big deal... I was here when we first brought handicapped kids into the building. There was a perception of me: I'm not one of them. It took a few years to change that. Once the perception of me improved, kids were more welcome. But there are still some teachers I wouldn't place a student with.

To summarize, across a range of districts in different states, schools with "good" leadership (as perceived by various school and district respondents) and a sense of cohesion among the staff showed few signs of rivalry, isolation, or poor communication between special and core staff, while comparable schools in the same districts serving the same population but with poor leadership and a deteriorated school climate had significant unresolved problems in staff relations.

The Classroom Teacher's Role

The presence of specialists in the school building has implications not only for the relationships between staff, but also for the role of individual teachers. Because they see most target students for only part of the day and share responsibility for them with other adults, there is a potential for elementary classroom teachers to assume less responsibility for such students. We found that, generally speaking, this is not the case, although the teacher's scope of responsibilities may have come to be defined differently.

At the elementary level, classroom teachers are typically aware of what their students are doing in pull-out situations, maintain some kind of contact with the specialist, and still feel in charge of the students' programs. Except in the case of students with more severe learning problems (who spend a large amount of the day elsewhere), most classroom teachers retain control over grading. The following kinds of comments illustrate the point. From an urban elementary classroom teacher with 18 out of 28 students participating in categorical programs:

> I am the primary teacher... I have all the responsibility... they are my children.

From a rural elementary teacher, regarding the resource room students in her classroom:

> I'm still their teacher. They have a desk and a mailbox here in the room, But so is [the resource room teacher] and her aide. I still feel responsible if a parent doesn't feel comfortable. I feel that's the homeroom teacher's responsibility.

From an inner-city third grade teacher, all but three of whose children left the room at one time or another:

> I talk with the learning center teacher when I plan kids' programs, and on an ongoing basis. Not daily, weekly meeting contact, but she'll tell me when a kid won't work with her. So I take away his recess privilege for a day, or something. So they're still my kids. It's important that a kid sees I'm still connected to them and take charge of their program. Also with Title I... But not with bilingual. I don't have any connection there.

Not all teachers express these kinds of sentiments. The factors distinguishing between those who do and those who don't are mostly program-specific and person-specific. The communication pattern between particular pairs of teachers and opinions about particular programs (e.g., bilingual programs, as in the preceding quote) seem to make the most difference, rather than the fact that responsibility for a student's program is shared. Neither do structural factors (the number of students out of the room, the number of programs in which they participate, or the amount of time spent out of the room) make a consistent difference. District policies and school leadership contribute as well. The various actions taken to enhance communication and reduce staff friction appear to help to set a tone that encourages teachers to feel responsibile for target students.

There is one important exception to the general pattern. Many classroom teachers seem to establish subtle limits to the scope of their responsibility for students they feel are too difficult to cope with or beyond their realm of expertise. The presence of specialists may have reinforced notions of limits on expertise. For example, one fourth grade teacher explained:

> If it's poor reading, I should take the blame for failures. Actually, we [Title I coordinator and teacher] have joint responsibility. Special education failures, however, are not my responsibility because I'm not trained in that.

When handicapped or minority civil rights mandates are first implemented, rejection of responsibility may go further. In such cases, temporary "dumping" of target students into specialized programs has taken place (most go into special education), because teachers don't understand the new service and its requirements or because they face a suddenly more heterogeneous--and difficult--classroom. In one rural district, for example, a teacher seized on the presence of a new learning disabilities resource room to unload more than half of his class. There were abnormally high referral rates to special education in several large urban districts during the initial years of a new desegregation plan which bused inner-city students to suburban schools. But the effect was apparently temporary. Local efforts (e.g., to curb referral rates) encouraged by state-level policies and federally supported training to orient staffs to the new programs have substantially alleviated the problem, at least in its overt form.

Responsibility for a student's overall instructional progam is less of an issue at the secondary level, where the students themselves, in consultation with counselors, are assumed to take responsibility for their own programs. We found that targeted programs at this level (which tend to serve such students in more individualized ways) are likely to give some adult a greater role in shaping and guiding the student's instructional program than otherwise would be the case--for example, special education teachers (who often write the entire schedule for their students and personally supervise the progress of mainstreaming) or bilingual counselors (who become a homebase for almost everything LEP students do in the school). Also, targeted programs are considered in many districts to be a major factor in keeping potential dropouts in school. Nonetheless, where they felt unable to cope, high school teachers were less willing to work with difficult target students in the same way described for elementary school staff.

Federal and state policies may have contributed over the long-term to our findings about scope of responsibility. Regulations to ensure the "supplementary" nature of Title I reading or LD services, for example, have encouraged arrangements that formalize the classroom teachers' responsibility. Policies to ensure minimal competence--stemming from state or district level, or both--have made teachers in several sites concerned about the performance of all students assigned to them, including target students. Federal or state policies that promote substantially separate arrangements--as in the case of services for the more severely handicapped and many bilingual programs--do, in effect, take primary responsibility out of the classroom teachers' hands, but give it to someone else rather than leaving it unassigned.

The scope of the classroom teachers' responsibilities has come to be defined differently as a result of special services in the school. Many elementary classroom teachers, for example, have taken on a more "managerial" role as they coordinate the activities of various specialists, supervise in-class aides, and manage the logistics of a complicated schedule. This usually means that they spend somewhat less time teaching on any given day, but the loss is offset by the additional instructional time provided by specialists and aides.

Differentiated Structure and Staffing in the School

In summary, there has been a considerable change in the structure and staffing of schools with large and diverse target student populations. In contrast to the typical elementary school of 20 years ago (and many schools of today with affluent and homogeneous populations), the schools on which we concentrated have added new hierarchical layers, expanded and specialized their staffs, modified roles, and--with varying degrees of success--worked out solutions to the problems of staff relations that inevitably arise. The result is a more complex and differentiated organizational arrangement, one that has increased the versatility of most schools and does not seem to have obviously or permanently impaired the school's ability to function.

LEA Structure and Staffing

At the district level, we investigated a set of topics parallel to those at the school: the types of positions and people brought to the LEA administrative office as a result of federal policies and their consequences for staff (and interdivision) relations.

New Positions, People, and Organizational Units

Federal policies have changed the shape of LEA district offices in ways similar to those described at school level, but with differences reflecting the nature of LEA administration. In addition to the support service staff previously described, who work primarily at one or more schools even though they are officially "district" employees, other staff have been installed in the district office with responsiblity for the following functions:

- Special program administration (of particular programs, as well as overall administration of federal and state programs)
- Research, evaluation, and testing
- Instructional support (consultation, materials)
- Grants development
- Student diagnosis and assessment
- Internal monitoring, auditing, or fiscal control
- Staff and program development.

These functions are assigned to particular staff or units in various combinations, depending on the size of the district, the preferences of the superintendents, the interests and abilities of relevant administrators, and a host of idiosyncratic factors. But three broad organizational patterns emerge. In the smallest districts, the new responsibilities are generally added to the many roles of existing administrators, although occasionally new positions are created (e.g., often a part-time project coordinator who handles paperwork). In the medium-sized districts, a small number of new administrators have joined the district office, typically an overall director of "federal and state programs," along with project coordinators and a few special support staff (diagnostician, curriculum consultant, perhaps a program evaluator). In the larger districts, many new positions have been created, existing positions subdivided, and existing positions replicated (e.g., additional psychologists or consultants in the special education department).

Except in the smallest districts, the distinguishing characteristic of all these arrangements is a formal separation between the positions or units responsible for the core instructional program, special education, vocational education (which sometimes includes programs specifically targeted to special needs students), "federal and state programs" (which usually means Title I and state compensatory programs, along with other discretionary programs such as those funded by Title IV-C), and LEP services (if present). Evaluation and staff development positions are sometimes separate; in other cases they are incorporated into one or more units.

The result is a larger and more differentiated administrative array than would be likely without categorical funding and associated regulations. This array reflects the separate federal and state funding sources and the design or accounting requirements associated with each program. But a large number of state and local factors play an important role as well. The three-way split between classroom, special, and vocational education, for example, is an enduring tradition in public school administration and predates federal involvement. Aggressive grantsmanship and program development in some districts has fostered new positions independent of federal funding. Particular state requirements (e.g., in Wyoming, requiring special education training for recertification of all teachers) has encouraged the expansion of certain district functions (in this case, staff development). Particular local priorities (e.g., remedial reading) have also generated certain specialized positions or units in the array.

The staff occupying specialized positions in the district office often come from different backgrounds or bring with them specialized training not previously seen in district administration. For example, one small rural district we visited, which was dominated by a tight-knit clique of male administrators, had a female director of special education. We found a black director of federal and state programs in a large urban district, and a Hispanic woman in charge of another district's bilingual program, the only senior administrator of her sex and ethnicity. (These were not isolated examples; we found such instances in many of the districts visited.)

Federal programs and associated civil rights mandates have contributed to this diversity by creating an alternative promotional route for those who were less likely to rise through the ranks in the traditional manner (via school administration) because of their age, sex, ethnicity, or lack of connection with the "old boy" network that governs advancement. The presence of such people in district administration does not necessarily affect the core group of most influential administrators--a district can easily respond to affirmative action mandates and constituency pressure by installing a minority administrator in charge of LEP services, housing his program in a different building, and leaving him on the sidelines of district policymaking. Whether such staff do or do not participate in top-level decisionmaking, they bring to their own areas of administrative concern a different set of skills and perspectives, which have the potential in the long-run to spill over into other areas of LEA functioning.

We found that the connection between the new people at the district office and the schools is not always direct, for several reasons. Much of the work of special program administrators, evaluators, or other specialized staff is done at the district office--planning, reporting, budgeting, accounting, interpreting requirements, responding to external groups. Only the "front line" staff (diagnosticians, psychologists, coordinators) are regularly out in schools. But also, perhaps in reaction to blurred lines of authority in the past, special program staff usually have no direct authority over teachers or their immediate superiors (principals) and consequently work with school people in a self-consciously advisory manner. In smaller districts, where everyone knows everyone else, personal contact is easier to maintain than in larger districts where district staff are not frequent visitors in any given school (with the exception of, for example, magnet schools or Title VII demonstration schools, which had been designated for concentrated attention by district office staff).

The usefulness of "all those people in the district office" was sometimes openly questioned by school administrators and teachers, especially in the largest districts. More typically, school respondents were indifferent. For example, specialists were usually lukewarm about the staff development activities put on by district administrators. The following comment from a Title I teacher in a large urban district was not uncommon:

> The district supervisor doesn't play a big enough role. She gives out a lot of handouts at the few city-wide meetings, but I wish she did more... They have the time. One year, I didn't see my supervisor once. I wonder what they do? Last year I saw my supervisor twice.

There are a number of explanations for the lack of contact between supervisor and teacher: size of the district, special circumstances (such as desegregation) that preoccupy district personnel, and the sheer number of responsibilities or personnel that district staff have to manage (not all district staff do, in fact, "have the time"). But the sentiment is widespread enough in large districts to suggest a more systematic explanation: Whatever new staff capabilities have been built into the LEA with federal support, they have not yet been translated into consistent or meaningful support for the schools.

Administrative Fragmentation at the LEA

Our findings about staff (and division) relations at the district level parallel those in the schools, but with some differences of degree. We found three principal ways in which the presence of multiple categorical programs and associated requirements increase the complexity and potential difficulties in LEA interdivision relations. The new specialized administrative units create areas of functional overlap (e.g., Title I reading programs, existing reading programs), they establish new power bases (e.g., by bringing new administrators or entire divisions into the LEA hierarchy, each with a claim on resources and "turf"), they make the district staff more heterogeneous, as already described. These kinds of changes have the potential to interfere with existing administrative arrangements.

While we found evidence of negative consequences, the dominant pattern across districts is a low level of friction, incompatibility, or strife. Once again, as with staff relations at the school level (and in part a cause of the changes found there), districts have experienced substantial difficulties in the past as a result of a more specialized and differentiated LEA staff. At least in the larger districts, there has been considerable "empire-building" by special program administrators (discussed more fully in Chapter V) and separate curricular frameworks have been developed with little reference to one another. Over time, the problem has been recognized, sometimes with a prod from the state; some states set policies to encourage coordination of specialized and regular programs. A variety of local policies have been put in place which effectively reduce the problem to a manageable level.

Devices used vary from site to site. In a few cases, the federal/state programs division has been relocated within the regular curricular division. Other districts have established joint task forces at the LEA that include the heads of special and regular divisions. Alternatively, these administrators sit together on the superintendant's cabinet. Lines of authority between schools and the district office have been clarified in many districts, so that school people no longer must, in effect, answer to two bosses.

Smoother relationships do not happen solely, or even primarily, as a result of formal policies or reorganization. More comfortable arrangements have grown informally, as administrators come to know each other over time. Special program staff who have risen to prominent positions in the LEA hierarchy facilitate the process. In one large urban district, five of the six top administrators have experience administering special programs; in another, experience running a Title I school is considered a prerequisite for rising into district administration.

Our data do not suggest that the complications associated with, and partially caused by, multiple categorical programs have been fully resolved. The efforts to alleviate administrative fragmentation have not changed the basic fact of separate units each concerned with overlapping segments of the district's instructional program. As times get tougher, some of the older animosities may be surfacing again. But if the LEA accepts the broad mandate implied by targeted programs and civil rights laws (and has to have more people to carry them out), workable solutions seem to be largely a matter of local ingenuity, resolve, and time.

Systematic Instructional Management

Federal policies have done more to the organization of schools and districts than put new positions and people in place. Service mandates and the rules and regulations governing federal (and state) programs spell out detailed procedures covering many aspects of "instructional management": identifying and placing target students, assessing needs, planning instruction, and documenting or evaluating instructional outcomes. Questions have been raised, as summarized in Chapter I, about the complexity, usefulness, and time burdens associated with these procedures.* We discuss instructional management procedures and their usefulness at two levels: the individual student program and the overall LEA program.** The consequences for school and LEA staff time will be taken up subsequently. At each level, we studied how systematically and formally the management functions were carried out, the degree to which the associated procedures were attributable to federal policies, and the perceived usefulness of systematic management approaches.

Systematic Instructional Management at the Student Level

In almost all the districts we visited, we found that elaborate procedures stemming in part from federal requirements have been developed to assess individual target students' needs, place them in various special classes, plan their instructional programs, and evaluate their progress. Across a number of programs, these procedures are systematic and formalized, in the sense that assessment instruments are used (usually tests), formal criteria are set up, input from specific participants required (or excluded), and a formal record of results maintained. These procedures tend to be more elaborate in the case of special education and some bilingual programs, less so in most compensatory programs.

The result is, generally speaking, that individual differences or needs among students are more likely to be noticed and subsequently matched with an instructional setting that can (in principle) handle those needs. As noted in Chapter III, the use of systematic placement procedures, for example, was widely credited with getting the "right" students into different types of special education class. One second grade teacher put it:

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*Questions have also been raised about intrusion on local discretion implied when procedures are specified at federal or state level. This issue is taken up in Chapter V.

** We also investigated effects on school-level instructional management, but found little, except as a result of state initiatives.

> You need all those steps [in the placement process]. It's a big decision to put a child in the resource room.

As these examples suggest, systematic approaches were mostly used during the initial stages of preparing a student's instructional program (i.e., at the identification, assessment, and placement stages). For example, across all types of districts in our sample, elementary students are typically given screening tests early in the year to determine eligibility for Title I reading or math. Students referred for special education undergo various forms of individual assessment and are subsequently placed on the basis of a joint decision by various participants (typically, teacher, principal, parent, special education staff). In districts able to secure appropriate funding (e.g., VEA set-aside grant), the vocational skills and potential of handicapped high school students are assessed in elaborate testing centers.

Systematic procedures are less consistently applied to the ongoing planning and evaluation of instruction for students, once placed. Here too, however, we found evidence that more formalized approaches are widely used. Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) are developed for special education students in all districts, though we were told that the annual reviews of IEPs were often done with less care than the initial ones. Title I teachers (in some districts, classroom teachers) set up individual learning objectives for compensatory students based on whatever diagnostic information they have. Individual records are kept of student progress in many kinds of special classes.

The use of these procedures cannot be attributed entirely to federal (or state) requirements, mandates, and funds. Testing, formalized evaluation, and individualized programs with systematic record keeping have been part of broad professional trends across the nation. However, Federal service mandates and the rules and regulations governing P.L.94-142, Title I, Title VII, and VEA set-aside funds--as interpreted and elaborated by state education agencies--are quite specific about the use of needs assessments, elaborate diagnostic procedures, and so on. Respondents told us in a number of ways that their reasons for the use of such formalized procedures included program requirements and associated monitoring, as the following district administrator's comment illustrates:

> Someone does come to monitor every year to see if you carry out what you propose. They're looking at whether you're keeping reports, records on each student... I require this of [my program] staff. We've gotten very good audits. I have them keep a notebook, then my project coordinator checks these...

Not all districts implement these procedures with the same degree of zeal. At one end of the spectrum, systematic procedures are considered a high priority and are carried out with great attention to the dictates of government rules and regulations. Such districts tend to be larger, more centralized, and more heavily monitored; but regardless of site characteristics, a philosophical inclination toward behavioral teaching approaches is an important factor in the use of these procedures. At the other end of the spectrum, formalized procedures are considered an adjunct to long-standing traditions of student assessment, planning, and evaluation that rely heavily on teacher judgment and informal methods. In such cases, the procedures are selectively used, simplified, or carried out pro forma.

LEAs also appear to go through a cycle in which periods of heavy reliance on formalized procedures give way to more streamlined and flexible procedures for accomplishing the same ends. This is particularly true of special education assessment and IEP procedures, but also of other programs. In one large urban district, LEA Title I staff developed a criterion-referenced diagnostic instrument far more elaborate than federal requirements dictate, which generated such opposition among teachers that it has been abandoned for a much simpler procedure.

Respondents in every district reflected a range of opinions about the educational merit of systematic procedures for managing students' instructional programs. Our respondents' judgments seemed to be most heavily influenced by their position within the school district, the importance they placed on ensuring that the "right" students got access to specialized instruction, their beliefs about the efficacy or validity of formalized approaches to instructional management, and the magnitude of the logistical problems associated with these approaches (e.g., time delays, paperwork). We elaborate on these points of disagreement below.

First, district staff tend to take formalized, systematic procedures more seriously than school staff, for various reasons. LEA staff appear to gain control over activities at the school level by imposing (and often by carrying out) these procedures. School staff often resent the imposition of district control. In the larger districts, where the different treatment of similar problems among schools can raise complaints about arbitrariness and where not all grievances can be handled by personal interaction, district staff are also likely to favor systematic procedures as a way of promoting fair, uniform treatment of problematic cases. Tension between maintaining a standardized policy for all cases and flexible handling of individual cases seems inevitable and is exacerbated where staff insist on rigid adherence to rules. In one such district, a fourth grade teacher complained bitterly about the LEA staff: "They deal with a program, we deal with kids."

Second, staff at either the district or school level who see themselves as advocates for the interests of special needs groups are likely to praise and promote the use of formalized procedures, which they see as a tool for assuring that target students get access to specialized help. Others, who placed less importance on providing target groups with special services, focused on the procedures themselves, and considered them a needless interruption of more pressing matters. Their complaints often focused on the validity, efficacy, or manageability of some particular assessment process.

Third, staff at various levels differ on the efficacy or validity of the procedures themselves. For example, it was not uncommon for experienced Title I teachers to complain about tests used to diagnose their students' reading needs. One put it this way:

> The testing is not useful to me. There's too much guesswork from the kids. I prefer my own on-the-spot assessment of what a child can do.

Others, who believed more in the tests (or who trusted their intuitions less), were grateful for instruments that could identify particular skill deficiencies. Similar differences of opinion occurred regarding procedures used in other programs, often among staff within the same school.

The range in points of view partially reflects basic philosophies or styles of teaching and partially the way in which a particular procedure is designed and implemented. There were examples of tests that were considered poorly designed or administered mechanically, such as the exit exam for a bilingual program in one district that was reputedly so hard that many English-speaking students couldn't pass it.

Fourth, logistical problems resulting from the way the procedures were implemented as much as from the procedures themselves caused some respondents to doubt the usefulness of systematic procedures. A particularly salient problem is time lag between a teacher's initial request for special help (e.g., in special education) and subsequent placement of the child.* Typically, several months elapse, and often more than a year. In cases, where the time between referral and placement exceeds several months, school teachers and administrators, anxious to deal with a needy student, complain that it takes so long to get action on a particular request; in some cases, teachers do not bother to refer students because of the delay.

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* Other logistical problems concerned our respondents, among them the demands on staff time, which we discuss later.

Systematic Program Management at the District Level

Federal policies have helped stimulate more widespread use of systematic approches to overall management of special programs in the district. All special programs are subject to yearly evaluations at the end of the school year. Applications for renewal of funds are supported by the required needs assessment surveys, routinely updated at regular intervals. Almost all special programs have stated objectives, formal plans of operation, and various forms of documentation. And, varying by the size of district and local predispositions toward data-based management, LEAs have installed positions or units to carry out the procedures.

Such activities are easily traced to federal resources and requirements. LEAs have to do these things in order to continue receiving federal funds and to avoid the embarrassment of audit exceptions or grievances. Other factors contribute, as well, ranging from broad professional trends and SEA espousal of rational management to more idiosyncratic causes--insistence by several school boards on evidence of program effectiveness or, in another site, the close relationship with a nearby university pioneering in the design of school district evaluation units.

Beyond assuring that government funds continue and demonstrating that the LEA is accountable for their use, these systematic program management approaches do not seem to contribute to program planning and decision making. Respondents' comments suggest various reasons for this: externally required information is often not what local district staff are interested in; program evaluation information (e.g., for Title I) is collected and analyzed too late in the year to play a role in decisions about the following year; evaluations are interpreted as intrusions on district staff turf; information gathering is manipulated by the programs to which it pertains and is therefore considered self-serving.

There are exceptions to this generalization, however. Information on program process, recently required by Title I, was considered particularly useful in several sites. Needs assessment surveys in many districts yield, at the least, a useful opinion poll of community and school staff preferences. The act of specifying program goals and formally working out a plan for achieving them is credited with helping to organize special services.

Our data also suggest that there are subtle and indirect cumulative influences of systematic program management on the way district staff go about their business. Besides expanding the base of information available for district decision-making, federal policies have apparently influenced the long-term process by which district staff approach planning and management tasks. Perhaps by repetition alone, district staff appear to have become more skillful at planning and problem solving. An assistant superintendent in one large urban district reflected on this matter:

> Our efforts to plan are to some extent traceable to federal programs and mandates. The impetus to plan initially had to require a reason to plan--i.e., the submission of proposals to the SEA for formula funds, plans for desegregation, or the need to plan for special education implementation. These, viewed as interventions, caused us to learn how to acquire the skills. Without the federal impetus, we wouldn't have done so as soon or on as large a scale. But also, planning is "in the air"... In the past you could get away with [doing] it. Now you've got to have it planned down to an ant's whisker.

From the schools' point of view, the pay-off of systematic program management at district level is not obvious. Teachers, for example, are generally unsympathetic to data collection that doesn't relate in some obvious way to their needs, though they may be tolerant if it doesn't intrude on teaching time. What is "best" for the system as a whole is not always desireable to an individual teacher or particular school.

Demands on Staff Time

Prompted by the concerns over "administrative burdens" reviewed in Chapter I, we asked what administrative activities were associated with special programs and who carried these activities out, whether this use of time was considered burdensome or wasteful (and by whom), and whether time for instruction suffered as a result. At the school level, we concentrated on the way key core staff were affected--principal (and assistant principal in the high schools), classroom or departmental teacher, and counselor--although we learned a great deal about time demands on special staff roles as well. Similarly, at district level, we concentrated on staff most closely associated with "line" instructional administration or overall district leadership (superintendent, director of curriculum and instruction, supervisor or curriculum consultant).* We discuss our findings separately for the school and the LEA.

Time Demands on School Staff

The presence of special services and associated requirements have added to the administrative tasks that school staff must perform. In addition to the instructional management tasks described earlier in the chapter (student assessment, diagnosis, placement, instructional planning, and evaluation), our respondents noted various types of activity that they considered particularly time consuming: keeping program records, maintaining contact with individual target group parents or with the community through mandated parent councils, managing the school schedule (especially at the beginning of the year), coordinating instruction, and supervising the additional staff.

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*Although titles and job descriptions at the LEA varied greatly across districts, the generic roles listed above appeared in some form everywhere. Our analysis leaves out the numerous more specialized roles found in larger districts, as well as noninstructional roles (business officer, coordinator of facilities or transportation, research and testing officer).

The aggregate amount of time spent on all these activities varies tremendously across schools and across individuals within each school. The number of separate services within the school, the nature of the programs and their requirements, and the absolute numbers of students participating in them (or referred to them) affect the administrative workload in an obvious additive way. District factors make a big difference, as well--whether district staff are available to pick up the most time-consuming tasks (e.g., special education case management) or the degree of program reporting they require of school staff.

The bulk of the administrative work associated with special services is carried out by special program staff. Classroom teachers generally do little, except attending special education placement meetings, communicating with specialists or aides about particular students, and a small amount of record-keeping. (In classrooms with a large number of program participants, the time could add up.) Principals, of necessity, are more involved in certain matters related to special programs--supervising specialists, coordinating logistics, and managing relations with the community. Their estimates of time spent, varying from no time at all to nearly half,* depend on the number, size, and nature of the programs in their building as well as on the availability of an "extra pair of hands" to whom they could delegate much of the detail. Most schools we visited had such a person or persons--often a counselor, an aide, a special program resource teacher (or the equivalent). The "extra pair of hands" is generally paid for with categorical funds. Finally, special teachers themselves shoulder a large part of the required administrative activity, particularly related to individual student programs, and are often given an extra planning period in which to carry out these required tasks.

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* We acknowledge here the notorious unreliability of self-reported time estimates. The figures, however, do express an order of magnitude that reflects the salience of these activities in the respondent's workday.

Contrary to our expectation, in the majority of schools we visited principals and classroom teachers do not consider their expenditure of time on such activities particularly burdensome or wasteful. One of three explanations usually applied. First, the availability of help relieves them of the most tedious chores associated with categorical programs. As one inner city elementary principal put it:

> There is a lot of paperwork, but my counselor has a grip on it. Without her, I'd scream louder.

Second, there is widespread, genuine relief about the way specialists help the school cope with some of its most pressing problems. One high school principal, who estimated that 30% to 40% of his time was devoted to matters related to target group instruction, put it:

> If I didn't have these programs, 80% to 90% of my time would be dealing with these kids--and their parents.

Third, many regular staff simply accept their new administrative activities as a necessary part of their jobs. Some of the newer, younger principals, for example, have never known any other way.

Certain staff are especially likely to experience the accumulated administrative activity as a burden. Counselors and special staff who took on the "extra pair of hands" role were understandably the ones from whom we heard the most complaints about time demands. But not all such staff felt burdened, no matter how much time they spent. Some liked bureaucratic tasks, particularly when these responsibilities put them in the position of informal authority (some functioned like an unofficial assistant principal and were thought of that way by their respective principals). Others thought of the administrative details as a natural result of the fact that their salaries came from a categorical source. Finally, many who were strongly committed to serving special needs groups believed that formalized procedural details and activities were necessary to ensure that target students got what they deserved, and hence were justified, however tedious they might be.

We found little evidence that the administrative activities, however burdensome, detract substantially from instructional time. The primary reason is that in most cases, federal (or state) categorical funds paid for additional staff time to manage administrative details. As a result, the time taken out of regular classroom instruction is minimal (e.g., for periodic meetings or testing). But there are two important exceptions: first, counselling clearly suffered whenever counselors took on major responsibility for managing categorical program detail. Second, the fact that specialists themselves do much of the administrative work related to their services means that their time for instruction or preparation could suffer. Additional planning periods are not always sufficient to keep up with paperwork.

The more committed specialists found ways around it, for example, by doing their IEPs at home at night or by working during break period. The less committed complained and took time out of their classes. The following comment by a special education teacher captured the dilemma:

> I see a stack of IEPs, orange audit forms, and paperwork this high. You're torn between teaching and filling out forms.

This sentiment was more prevalent among special education teachers, but other specialists expressed similar views. In districts under less fiscal stress and/or with more categorical programs, there are usually enough additional staff so that specialists can perform their jobs without distraction.

Although categorical funds reduced burdens on local staff, federal policies contributed to the perception of burden and the encroachment on instructional time in several respects. Rules accumulated across programs and generally had to be dealt with separately (one state had consolidated a number of applications and evaluation provisions) and repeatedly. The complexity of particular procedures (e.g., in special education) also generated burdens and enhanced the likelihood of encroachment in obvious ways. The rules that have a less obvious relationship to instructional goals (e.g., to demonstrate fiscal accountability or targeting) were also more likely to cause discomfort (see Chapter V).

Time Demands on LEA Staff

At district level, the administrative workload associated with special programs falls into two categories: routine administration and nonroutine issues. Most administrative activities associated with special services are by now routine--preparing applications for funds, documenting the use of these funds, managing compliance with mandates or program regulation, hiring and supervising special teaching staff, preparing program guidelines for school staff, managing special program budgets and inventories, and so on. Such activities are handled almost exclusively by special program managers and their staffs, but can involve staff not supported by categorical funds (school psychologists, for example, may spend all of their time, with the student assessments required by state and federal special education law).

Nonroutine matters, however, often with crisis potential or systemwide ramifications, take up considerable time and energy of line instructional administrators (directors of curriculum), superintendents, and assistant superintendents, as well as special program staff. Examples given by respondents in various districts include: coping with desegregation and associated requirements emanating from OCR or the courts (typical in the larger urban districts); handling parental grievances and potential grievances; setting policies regarding the interpretation of ambiguous requirements which have broad implications for classroom instruction (e.g., the "least restrictive environment" provision); conducting initial systemwide self-studies of sex equity compliance in response to Title IX.

Such activities challenge existing arrangements and demand close attention from regular administrators for a period of time--as long as it takes to work out a way of coping with the challenge. In the case of desegregation, this could mean a matter of years; in the case of sex equity compliance, the initial assessment and reconsideration of policies was typically accomplished in a much shorter time. These matters are more likely to be viewed as burdensome by LEA administrators where:

- Their commitment to the intent of the policies is not strong.
- The combination of sanctions (federal and state monitoring, the courts) and local political pressures (e.g., from local advocacy groups) make the issue difficult to smooth over.
- The sheer complexity of implementation means that logistics are difficult to work out and the side effects numerous.
- Local factors such as fiscal strains or the closing of schools complicate the LEA's response to the mandate or requirement.
- The school district faces several challenges to its existing policies at the same time.

With the exception of the lack of commitment to government policy intent, which occurred idiosyncratically, these conditions are more prevalent in the larger urban settings and in states with declining economies and student populations (e.g., Massachusetts and Ohio).

The routine matters of special program administration, by contrast, are not generally considered burdensome by special program staff. In light of the major investment of time necessary to carry out these tasks, the absence of complaint is remarkable. Several explanations seem to apply. First, handling administrative details for a particular program is the job of LEA special staff--their primary reason for being. Second, the requirements that take their time also confer on them a certain amount of power and influence. Third, staff do not hesitate to bend rules in small ways to suit their needs and those of their districts.*

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* See Chapter V for a more extended discussion of the last two points.

District size considerably alters the way workloads are distributed and burdens perceived. In the smallest districts, where LEA administrators wear many hats, categorical programs can bring additional responsibilities to line administrators that in larger districts would be automatically handled by categorical program staff. In one rural district, for example, the superintendent, who was the only full-time professional administrator at LEA-level, found himself filling out applications for P.L. 94-142 flow-through funds, preparing for a large Title I audit, advising the fiscal officer on accounting for special program expenses, and arranging materials for special education teachers. He acknowledged that these things did take a good deal of time and detracted from curricular planning he might otherwise have done. A director of curriculum in a small urban district in the same state, on the other hand, indicated that his time was virtually unaffected because, "I have good people running special programs. They handle it."

Both the routine and nonroutine administrative activities associated with special programs may have detracted from the time that LEA administrators devote to instructional support. As noted earlier in this chapter, school staff are often dissatisfied with their degree of contact with district personnel, which in some cases reflect conscious decisions to shift LEA role priorities (e.g., from instructional resource to assessment and placement). School dissatisfaction with LEA aloofness may come about for other reasons, including the number and complexity of the administrative details associated with categorical programs.

Federal Influences on Workloads and Perceived Burdens

Collectively, the federal policies we studied generate a great deal of administrative work at the local level. The number and specificity of requirements, the complexity of certain procedures, and the mere presence of additional staff adds to the list of tasks to which someone must pay attention. No matter how efficiently the school or district handles these tasks, they still constitute a major investment of staff time.

But the amount of administrative work associated with special services does not necessarily evoke a sense of burden. Generally, we found that local educators felt less "burdened" by federal policies then one would expect, considering the amount of time spent on managing special services. The most important factor is that while federal (and state) requirements generate time-consuming work federal (and state) funds constitute the means by which most of the work is done. Where categorical funding does not pick up the tab, core program staff at LEA and school level add new administrative tasks to their already busy schedules. But even this fact by itself does not mean that principals, teachers, or district staff feel "burdened," though some do feel so, especially where they do not believe in the programs' intent or structure, or where they perceive the administrative activity as mere busy work.

Various factors mediate federal effects on the workload of particular staff (especially key core positions) and the degree of burden they feel. State (and district) elaboration of federal requirements could substantially increase what was demanded of local staff (see discussion of rule transmission in Chapter V). Strict monitoring and the threat of legal action also contributed in some districts to the time spent on administering special services. As previously described, local actions to concentrate the administrative work on few people and positions, generally freed others and relieved their sense of burden.

As with other organizational effects, the pattern of demands on staff time has changed considerably over time. The burdens have apparently been heavier in the past, when programs were new (especially during the first years following P.L.94-142), and when fiscal accounting requirements and associated monitoring was stricter. There has been, however, a pervasive tendency for the most time-consuming administrative activities to become streamlined. As a result, the original federal requirements are often given a different meaning or emphasis. The clearest examples of this were found in special education, though there were examples in virtually all programs. The writing of IEPs by school staff was a case in point, as a high school special education department head explained:

> We've streamlined the IEPs. We had problems getting them all done on time... We got a list of class objectives from various teachers, then make up schedules, and write in [the relevant objectives for each student]. In the future we may be using a checklist. A lot of IEPs end up looking the same. The people in the SEA who created the IEPs haven't taught...

Although what this respondent described may appear to subvert the intent of the law (an individualized educational program), it is, in fact, a compromise between a strict interpretation of the law and a complete lack of individualization.

These changes do not happen quickly, but apparently take place over a period of years in a slower evolutionary process. The result is usually a more workable--though still in some respects burdensome--arrangement, as explained by the coordinator of a vocational special needs program in one site:

> We know that the record-keeping is somewhat of a burden. We've tried to streamline by making our forms as much of a checklist as possible to minimize writing. It took us time to evolve this. We change our record forms almost every year. We keep working at it.

Summary

The major findings regarding effects on school and LEA organization can be summarized as follows:

(1) School and LEA staffs are larger, more specialized, and more diverse as a result of federal funds, requirements, and mandates.

(2) The new positions and people brought by federal funding and mandates make schools more versatile but also more organizationally complex. Similarly, the additional staff complicate the organization of the LEA, while increasing its capacity for problem solving and instructional support (a capacity that is often not felt at school level).

(3) Initially, the presence of specialized staff at either level poses a problem of staff relations (or interdivision relations), by increasing the potential for professional rivalry, isolation, and other communication difficulties. Over time under most circumstances, these problems have been resolved primarily through a combination of specialist initiative, local leadership, and supportive district policies. Through sustained support and policy adjustment, federal policies have contributed to the solution of these problems.

(4) Classroom teachers' sense of responsibility for target students who receive instruction seems relatively unaffected by the fact that these students spend part of the day outside the room, except in specific local circumstances. Nonetheless, classroom teachers roles have been affected, for example, by taking on a more "managerial" role.

(5) Federal procedural and fiscal requirements have contributed to the widespread use of systematic instructional management approaches, both at the individual student level and at the district program level. These approaches are particularly evident in certain programs (e.g., special education), in larger districts, and in situations where belief in behavioral approaches to education is strong.

(6) Perceptions of the usefulness of systematic instructional management approaches vary considerably. District staff and those who see themselves as advocates for target student's interests tend to find them more useful than others.

(7) Special services supported or mandated by federal or state government generate considerable administrative detail, much of it stemming from accountability requirements and the use of systematic instructional management approaches. The bulk of this detail is handled by staff supported by categorical funds (resource teachers, district staff) and by certain local staff (e.g., counselors). Except where such persons are unavailable, principals' and teachers' workload have not increased substantially.

(8) At school level, core staff do not generally view the time they spend on administrative activity related to target group instruction as burdensome or wasteful, principally because: categorical funds (or occasionally local funds) support someone who provides an "extra pair of hands" to handle the increased workload; there is genuine relief at the additional help specialists provide; core staff have come to accept these activities as simply "part of our job."

(9) The administrative workload associated with special services does not generally have much effect on classroom teachers' instructional time, but may diminish the time specialists devote to instruction.

V LOCAL DECISIONMAKING

Chapters III and IV have shown the effects of federal initiatives on services students receive and on school and district resources, organization, and routines. This chapter looks more specifically at the federal requirements themselves and the changes they--and federal resources--introduce into local decisionmaking processes. The chapter also explains more fully the processes by which effects described earlier have come about.

The chapter is organized in four parts. We first look at the requirements themselves as transmitted through intergovernmental layers and as understood at the local level. We then describe school and district responses to the federal rules. Next, we explore effects on the discretion exercised by local actors and power relationships among them. Finally, we discuss the involvement of external constituencies (parents of target group members and advocacy groups) in school and district decisionmaking.

Requirements Transmitted to Districts and Schools

Earlier parts of this report indicate that federal requirements influence local education in significant ways. However, the process of translating laws into local programs is not simple.

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* The principal author of this chapter is Brenda J. Turnbull, Policy Studies Associates.

Principles of the Federal Laws

The educators we interviewed, including federal program specialists, tend to see in federal requirements a few key principles that underlie a welter of detail. For example, a key principle of the laws in special education is that they mandate service for all eligible young people. Teachers and administrators know that this is the law, and they recognize the consequences for local resource distribution. Similarly, they recognize that language-minority children have a claim on specialized services, and that girls are entitled to equality in athletics and access to nontraditional vocational programs.

It is also universally recognized that special programs are not intended to serve every child--that the resources are supposed to be targeted on those in need. School personnel may quibble over the method used to select participants (e.g., criticizing a particular test or saying that teacher judgment should be used in selection). However, the concept of targeting services on those identified as needy commands broad understanding and acceptance.

On matters of program design, one phrase stands out for educators as the capsule description of what they are supposed to do: "supplement, not supplant." This phrase came up in virtually every district, in our discussions with both administrators and teachers, and was used to summarize a whole cluster of requirements that go by other names in Washington. For educators, "supplement not supplant" is the umbrella for requirements on comparability and general aid, as well as a host of rules devised in states and school districts to keep categorical programs (especially Title I) distinct from anything else that goes on in schools. Teachers were likely to quote the phrase when explaining that students could not be served by more than one special program, although in fact the federal Title I regulations then in force were designed to ensure that students would be served by multiple programs when appropriate. Elementary school teachers also generally described the Title I curriculum as "supplementary" when they meant that the classroom teacher retains the primary responsibility for a student's overall program. Even in districts that have had many federal programs for years, where administrators are familiar with the details of all the requirements, the whole set of Title I fiscal controls and design requirements was summarized by the one phrase, "supplement not supplant."

Across our full sample, these three broad types of requirements--mandated services, targeting of funds, and a cluster of design requirements popularly called "supplement not supplant"--are perceived to constitute the essence of federal rules. These principles were expressed with remarkable consistency by respondents in widely divergent settings.

At the school level, however, there is a paradox in the way requirements are viewed. On the one hand, people summed up the essence of the requirements in broad and loose terms. On the other hand, they were trying to follow a set of rules far more detailed than those Washington had prescribed. Since the specific rules were as important as the underlying principles in influencing local behavior, we analyzed the sources of the rules.

Rules Developed by States, Auditors, and Districts

In general, program requirements become tighter as they are passed down from one level of government to the next. The clearest examples of added specificity come up in Title I, a program in which states and school districts are responsible for spelling out their own rules within the federal framework. As the law passes through the pipeline from the federal government, to the state, to the district, and to the school, rules accrete. For example, we heard about the struggle to keep Title I student/staff ratios down to the required number. This number varies from state to state, and even among districts within the same state: sometimes no more than six students can be with the Title I teacher at the same time; sometimes the limit is four students; sometimes a limit is placed on the total student load for a Title I teacher, and it can be eighteen students or thirty. Whatever the requirement may be, it is strictly enforced by state monitors and local program managers.

The issue of how to serve students who are eligible for more than one special program seems especially vulnerable to restrictive state, district, and school interpretation. The federal Title I regulations went into considerable detail in an effort to assure eligible students of service, whether or not they might also be participating in other programs. However, most of the districts we visited have formal or informal rules against providing more than one type of service to the same student. As discussed in Chapter III, these rules reflect local efforts to ration scarce resources and to minimize interruptions of an individual student's day. In addition, the states appear to encourage (or at least not to discourage) such rules.

Moreover, as the rules on multiple eligibility are transmitted from the district to the school, they become more simplified and thus more restrictive. In one large district, for example, the Title I director explained that if a student received 120 minutes of reading in the special education resource room, Title I would not provide reading instruction to that student. A Title I teacher simplified this rule by tightening the time limit and leaving out the part about reading, saying,

> if a student is not [in the resource room] for 1-1/2 or 2 hours, I can work with him for half an hour. If they're full [resource room] students, I'm not allowed to work with them. It would be supplanting.

A special education teacher in another school made the rule sound even stricter:

> If a child is in special ed, he's not supposed to be in Title I. The Title I director thinks it's too much to have both. It's also good to allow another child to get the benefits.

State laws and regulations also add extra provisions to the federal requirements in special education. These include elaborate pre-referral procedures, such as filling out lengthy forms and trying to modify the student's regular classroom program. As in Title I, the states typically prescribe maximum student/staff ratios for various types of special education services. One state has its own IEP form calling for a detailed program description.

Experienced program managers, especially those in the larger districts, recognize that state governments add program requirements beyond those specified in federal law. Local managers in one district commented that their state education agency has reasonable requirements for its own programs but imposes stricter rules on the programs it administers for the federal government. In another state, a local manager spoke of his state's increasing orientation to monitoring:

> They took the worst of the federal regulations and adopted a state version.

In the same district, we were told that state monitors have offered suggestions on program design, then later checked on compliance with these "suggestions."

Auditors, especially from the federal government, also play a large part in defining acceptable local practice. Scrutiny from these outsiders is seen as unpleasant and threatening--a powerful stick for enforcing compliance with the most conservative interpretations of program requirements. District officials vividly remember the Title I audits they underwent 10 years ago, and they know the stories about recent audits in other districts. The experience and hearsay have left them wary of audit exceptions. The power of the auditing system is illustrated by two districts where program managers, who were quite knowledgeable about the ins and outs of the Title I regulations, admitted to us that they do not really like pull-out programs, but that they use this program design because it makes compliance with the fiscal controls easy to demonstrate.

In short, the primary transmitters and enforcers of federal requirements are auditors and state monitors. These officials, together with district staff, are largely responsible for developing the specific guidelines that define the boundaries of acceptable program implementation for each state or district.

Why do the interpretations of requirements tend to become stricter as they move through administrative layers in the audit agencies, states, districts, and sometimes schools? A logical answer is that the accountability structures built into federal laws, in which each level is accountable to one or more levels above it, inevitably rewards conservative interpretations of requirements. A state, fearing audit exceptions, tries to hold its districts to a standard slightly stricter than what is spelled out in federal regulations. A district, fearing audit exceptions and reprisals from the state, develops program guidelines that are at least as strict as the state standard. When teachers summarize the district guidelines for outside visitors, like us, they presumably give an even stricter version, just to be on the safe side.

No one at any level of the system has anything to gain from interpreting requirements loosely--at least when spelling out the requirements for some formal purpose, such as developing a set of guidelines or explaining those guidelines in an interview. Where people depart from formal rules, and where looser constructions of requirements come into the system, is in actual practice in schools.

Responses to the Requirements

Compliance

Compliance with federal and state rules has become a manageable way of life for people in the districts and schools we visited. While they may criticize particular requirements, people in all kinds of roles--administrators, classroom teachers, program staff--tend to understand and agree with the concepts underlying the rules. These concepts include access (reflected in the mandate for services for special-needs students), targeting of resources, provision of something extra for target students ("supplement not supplant"), and accountability for special funds.

Most people recognize that funds can be abused and that program provisions were designed to prevent such abuse. A typical comment was that of a program supervisor: "We have had a lot of strings put on legislation because of the foul-ups [educators] have made in the past." The treasurer of another district put it more bluntly: "In this district, there is the potential for abuse" (a view borne out by principals' efforts to use program funds for non-target students or to use specialists as substitute teachers). Still, this understanding of the purpose of the strings is often coupled with a desire for a simpler system. Principals and superintendents were especially likely to tell us they wished they could be trusted to allocate and account for program resources.

Compliance with federal requirements makes sense to people in part because the requirements are imposed as a condition of receiving federal funds. People in schools and districts believe they have made a bargain with the federal government in which they put up with rules in order to receive funds. They also recognize that some of the formal procedures associated with special programs, such as determining eligibility on the basis of test scores, are necessary in order to demonstrate their responsible use of funds to an outside authority. An experienced aide in a Title I program explained, for example, that she could instantly spot the kindergarten children who need her help, but that she goes through the ritual of administering tests in order to show federal auditors that she is using "their" money properly.

Another reason for compliance is that the rules have solved problems for people in schools and districts. At the school level, the rules help to define each teacher's options for dealing with the students who are most difficult to teach. Classroom teachers, confronted with heterogeneous classrooms in which several students cannot keep up, have followed the rules that assign those students to specialists for extra help. Special teachers, especially in programs for the handicapped, have used the requirements to make sure that troublesome students are not inappropriately "dumped" into their programs. As a special education teacher said, the elaborate identification and assessment process means that "now we have got the right kids in EMR."

At the district level, requirements have relieved administrators and school boards of the burden of making difficult resource allocation decisions. While some of these people expressed a desire to make more of the decisions locally, others said they feared the local political wrangles that would ensue if requirements were loosened. The prospect of allocating block grant funds under Chapter 2, Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), was unattractive to many local decisionmakers. In a small, fiscally stressed district that stands to lose a good deal of money in the transition to Chapter 2, the manager of federal and state funds said, "Everybody is coming out of the woodwork with their pet projects." A school board member in another small district said that with categorical programs:

> It was easier; things were decided for you. That takes the heat off the local board. If we got a block grant we'd have to sit down and figure out what to do with it. Some people would be upset, like nearby in the county seat when they got one of those Community Development Block Grants. There were three or four hearings; it kind of divided the people... But I guess this community could work it out.

We also found instances of district staff using the existence of requirements to justify decisions that actually reflected their own choices. For example, in a district where serving young children is a strong local priority, and where the state allows districts to choose the grade levels for Title I services, still the director of federal programs said that the reason no Title I services were offered in the high school was that "not enough [high school] students claimed eligibility for the school lunch program."

Compliance is tempered, of course, by selective departures from requirements. Over time, people learn that rules can be stretched. We did not observe or hear about wholesale flouting of the law, but we saw scores of examples of small-scale violations. The great majority of these seem to have resulted from individual teachers or administrators deciding that compliance would not serve students' best interests. For example, short cuts are taken in some of the procedural steps necessary to place handicapped children in special programs. Teachers paid out of Title I funds include one or two nontarget students in their classes. Lessons in English as a second language are substituted for some of the lessons in students' ancestral culture that are supposed to be part of bilingual programs.

Because educators sometimes make judgments that are contrary to program requirements, the job of program manager in a district can be a delicate one. Program managers must constantly exercise their discretion to decide which violations they can tolerate. Because so many violations are short-term in nature and not traceable through written records, monitors or auditors from outside the district will never find out about them; thus it is the local program managers who must decide how to handle noncompliance. This has greatly enhanced the discretionary authority of these managers--a fact with implications that are explored later in this chapter.

Instances of Discomfort With Requirements

We found surprisingly little resentment toward federal requirements in the aggregate, but particular rules draw criticism in particular places. We offer below some generalizations about types of requirements that cause opposition or strain at the school level, the district level, or both.

At both school and district levels, educators have trouble accepting federal requirements that they think are based more on social policy than on educational rationales. Desegregation, a contentious issue in some of the larger districts, is a prime example. Some states' emphasis on bilingual services, rather than ESL, for students of limited English proficiency is also highly controversial: in several districts where bilingual programs are required by the state, a common view is that these programs inappropriately maintain foreign cultures in what should be an American school system. The Title I policy of targeting funds on high-poverty schools was roundly criticized, not just by those who thought every school should participate, but also by those who said that low achievement should be the sole basis for the targeting. (A superintendent explained that in his view, Title I targeting should be based entirely on "educational deficits," not "school lunch.")

At the school level, people tend to be uncomfortable with requirements or procedures that diminish the importance of teacher judgment in decisions on placement or programming. The specific requirements that are bothersome in this regard vary from district to district, depending on what rules the district has developed. The examples include Title I selection procedures that give little or no weight to teacher judgment, or that do not accommodate teachers' recommendations on whether to serve the students who fall just above or below a cut-off point. In one district that had a highly elaborate, locally developed set of tests for "graduating" students out of the bilingual program, teachers inside and outside the program chafed at their inability to get students out of the program.

Rules that involve firm numerical criteria for decisionmaking are often controversial. The upper limits on Title I class size, developed at the state or district level to comply with the federal targeting requirements, are often seen as inappropriately rigid. A first grade teacher said:

> My [Title I] aide is restricted to four children per half hour. I have five children in the low group, and she should take them for half an hour. Still, I understand--if there were no limit, an aide might be asked to serve fifteen children.

Teachers also object when they feel excluded from decisions about what special programs will cover. This feeling has developed in some schools where conservative district or school interpretations of requirements have impeded coordination between classroom program and special services.

Another frequent source of problems at the school or district level is any new requirement. Teacher and counselors have managed to routinize their responsibilities under P.L. 94-142 by now, but they remember vividly their difficulties in fulfilling its requirements, especially the development of IEPs, a few years ago. A new program brings new staff members to assimilate into the building, new administrative chores, and new problems of program fragmentation to combat. (These problems are discussed in Chapters III and IV.)

At the district level, federal or state requirements that result in costly services are especially likely to be resented. The requirement that handicapped students receive "related services" at district expense is highly unpopular, both because it involves what most local managers consider noneducational matters and because it can be an expensive mandate. Indeed, the whole idea of a mandate for special education is causing stress at the district level where resources are tight and where the state takes a strong interest in the handicapped. (In our sample, the districts affected in this way are in Massachusetts and California.)

We found a few instances in which someone--a district or state administrator, or perhaps an auditor--had developed an especially restrictive interpretation of requirements, which prevented a district from using its own money in ways that local policymakers would have chosen. The Title I rules are sometimes perceived to forbid the use of local funds for Title I-like services (although in fact there are cost-sharing and targeting techniques that make this possible). In one district, a preschool Title I program is seen as a great success that would also be of benefit to nontarget children. However, remembering a bad experience 10 years ago, when the district was found to be using Title I funds for general aid, administrators feel unable to expand the program to the whole district. (In fact, since the district is quite well off financially, they could undoubtedly come up with a legal way of doing this while shifting Title I resources into some other area of need. Apparently the state department of education, where officials are also very wary of audit exceptions, has not helped or encouraged the district to do this.) In a district in another state, where Title I auditors also cracked down 10 years ago, an administrator flatly stated, "we can't do anything for the kids in schools that don't qualify. That would be supplanting." These districts, although their problem was not typical, illustrate an unfortunate consequence of the general tendency to interpret requirements conservatively.

While district officials dislike restrictive requirements, they also dislike the opposite problem--ambiguous requirements that lead to inconsistent or arbitrary enforcement. The experienced program managers, particularly those who were involved with Title I in the early 1970s (when auditors cracked down on violations after a period of lax enforcement), view deregulation as a prelude to eventual problems with auditors. The lack of regulations in ECIA makes them apprehensive about auditors and monitors who will come in "shooting from the hip," as one local program manager put it. Written regulations, said another manager, give the district "flexibility through specificity"--that is, local decisions can be made more easily when the range of acceptable program variation is clear.

Responses to Unpopular Requirements

People in districts and schools have a variety of ways of coping with the requirements that pose problems for them. At the school level, minor rule breaking is fairly common; teachers exercise their own judgment about placements and services, whether or not they are formally supposed to do so.

Another coping strategy is to complain and negotiate up through the intergovernmental system. People in school complain to district program managers and top administrators, who can sometimes solve the problems. For example, Title I directors often switch back and forth between selecting students in the spring (for the following school year) and the fall, depending on the preferences expressed by the teachers and principals. Directors of special education in most districts have simplified the IEP process in various ways. Superintendents often take action across programs; we spoke to one who was planning to reduce the amount of testing going on in the district, in response to teachers' and principals' dissatisfaction.

District officials can sometimes succeed in negotiating new interpretations of requirements from the state. In one state, we heard that the state department of education had announced it would monitor compliance in special education less rigorously, due to the many complaints expressed to the chief state school officer from local districts. In some instances, federal law or regulations have been changed in response to problems experienced locally. An example that seems to stand out in people's minds is that of the prohibition on Title I staff carrying out noninstructional duties, which was lifted in the 1978 amendments to ESEA because it caused friction in so many schools.

On the other hand, people in schools and districts sometimes passively accept and comply with requirements that they dislike. This struck us with particular poignancy when the "requirement" was in fact a figment of someone's imagination at the local level. A teacher recalled that she had sometimes had trouble finding five students in her class who needed to go to a particular pull-out program every day--until she finally realized that five students was the upper limit, not the prescribed number. In one medium sized district, teacher assignments were controlled by the Title I director, who used an extremely strict interpretation of the comparability requirements to insist that staff characteristics and salaries in all schools must match perfectly. If a teacher with high seniority retired for example, massive reassignments took place so that the teaching salaries in all schools would remain equal. Although the superintendent and principals hated this system, they had not explored the regulations enough to find out that seniority pay was specifically exempted from the comparability calculations.

Most often, however, people in schools and districts have been able to work out comfortable accommodations with the requirements. Problems are solved over time--by bending the rules, by finding out that the most restrictive interpretation is not necessary, by negotiating a new interpretation from the state, or by readjusting school or district routines to accommodate what is required.

Discretion and Power Within Districts

Debates over the worth and appropriateness of federal education laws sometimes revolve around the issue of their effect on local discretion and flexibility. In these debates, it is commonly assumed that a local school system is an entity with aims and preferences which may be thwarted by federal laws and regulations. Our findings indicate that this assumption overlooks the complexity of local decisionmaking. Individual superintendents, program managers, principals, teachers, and parents do have their own ideas about how school programs ought to run, but typically they do not agree with each other. Thus a federal requirement, rather than overturning local decisions, is likely to enhance the discretion or power of some members of a local school system as all the local decisionmakers negotiate resource distribution and program design. Simultaneously, federal funds have the effect of increasing the scope and complexity of school and district activities--so that there are more decisions to be made and hence more authority to go around. Thus, the nature of the influence exerted by federal laws on local power relationships is not simple or predictable.

For example, it might be expected that the presence of mandates and earmarked funds would lessen the power of superintendents by placing some program elements and spending patterns outside their control. However, while we did hear this complaint from some superintendents, we also spoke with superintendents who praised the federal programs as the instruments that allowed them to do things they would otherwise have found impossible. In all districts, of course, superintendents told us that they welcome the addition of outside funds to their budgets. Some also had a good word for the requirements that accompany the funds, like the two superintendents who mentioned that federal mandates had helped them increase opportunities for minority students in their districts, when local attitudes would have supported other priorities.

In discussing the gains and losses in power that federal policies have introduced into districts, there are two key decisionmakers--the special program manager and the principal--whose discretion is especially likely to be affected by federal funding and requirements.

Empowering Program Managers Within the District

Although staff at all levels could act as advocates for special-needs populations, the managers of special programs were especially likely to take on this role.* The manager of desegregation in a large district summed up the way he, like his counterparts in other districts, has gained leverage:

> I use requirements to help move things around here... [I say,] 'This is the law.'

Most directors of special education and bilingual education also view themselves as advocates who have the backing of a service mandate. Title I directors generally rely on the targeting requirements to keep funds concentrated on the eligible students.

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* We concentrate here on program managers, but also observed that other staff (teachers, program coordinators and other district-level staff) sometimes took on advocacy roles.

We observed that the most experienced program managers tend to avoid taking a heavy handed, legalistic stance with district and school staff--perhaps because they established their power in earlier battles (which many of them recalled for us). They emphasized that they would not hesitate to use their power if necessary, however. This is illustrated by the example of a Title I director in a small district who epitomizes an easygoing administrative style. Not a stickler for every rule, he allows some ineligible students to join the Title I classes for short-term help and some Title I materials to be used in regular classrooms. He also enjoys informal power as a member of the superintendent's inner circle. However, in an interview, he emphasized his ability to stop any real abuses of program funds:

> If my program is threatened, I can get [the state capital] on the phone and they'll be here in one second. It happened in [a nearby town]. [The state Title I director] and his team were out there in force right away and scared the hell out of that superintendent.

We found that administrators in a few districts feel that the managers of special programs have invoked the law too insistently. Perhaps coincidentally, the three most striking examples of this phenomenon all involve female program managers, two of them Hispanic, in districts run by homogeneous groups of male, Anglo administrators who have had little experience working with people unlike themselves. The women's programs--special education in one case, bilingual in the other two cases--are resented by many other administrators in the districts, but are apparently being implemented in compliance with the law.

More commonly, program managers use a more subtle lever to gain power in the district--knowledge of requirements. The authority they derive from citing specific regulations sometimes carries the day in debates over district policy or school practice. (This also helps explain their tendency) to interpret requirements strictly.

Altering the Balance of Power Between District Office and Schools

The district's gain in power and influence could mean a corresponding loss for school decisionmakers, especially principals. However, we found a more complicated story.

Principals' assessments of their gains and losses vary by district and by program. Principals in some districts feel that special program staff have reduced their discretion over resource distribution. This feeling seemed especially pronounced in one large district, where we spoke with several principals with many years of experience. They explained that the possibility of scrutiny from auditors and monitors makes district staff impose tight requirements on the schools, and that the administrative set-asides available in federal and state grants support some unneeded staff members at the district level, cutting into service provision at the school level. In other districts, however, principals seem much more content with the amount of discretion available to them in matters of resource distribution.

Principals' views about how much discretion they want over program design seem to vary by program. Throughout our sample, principals are not interested in designing special education services, preferring to leave these design decisions to program specialists. They like to make some decisions about the other programs, though--and, in virtually all districts, they do. In one large and centralized district, for example, the use of some teacher judgment in selecting Title I participants satisfies the school staff's desire for input into that program. Other districts offer principals choices in staff composition (teachers vs. aides), program design (pull-out vs. in-class), or scheduling.

In a sense, special programs have increased the opportunities for principals to exercise authority. Added resources, including a larger and more differentiated staff, enlarge the scope of discretionary decisions that a principal can make--as long as the central district office does not preempt these decisions. Most principals said they were glad to have these resources, and they spoke of their expanded opportunities to hire special staff and arrange a variety of services.

These findings suggest that the balance of power between districts and schools should not be viewed as a zero-sum game. Principals have more going on in their school because of special programs, and this increases their decisionmaking power. At the same time, there are more opportunities for program managers to make decisions affecting the schools. In one district in our sample, principals have serious complaints about this. In general, though, both levels seem to have gained power from the presence of federal funds and requirements.

Response to Empire-Building

The possibility that special program staff at the district level might gain too much power over schools or the rest of the district administration has occurred to top administrators in several of our sample districts, especially the larger ones. In several districts, superintendents have recently taken steps to reduce the power of special-program managers and improve program coordination by placing more decisions in the hands of line administrators. Such a change has taken place in five of the seven large districts we visited. Apparently the power of special programs was especially noticeable in large districts because the relatively large program budgets gave special program managers discretionary spending power and allowed specialized staffs to grow. Managers of these programs also tended to invoke outside authority to further bolster their own decisionmaking power. A top administrator in one large district, observing that special program offices have the potential to gain too much power, said:

> There are three programs that have to be watched--vocational education, special education, and federal programs.

Two large districts changed their procedures for program planning so that teachers would be among the planners. In one of these districts, an administrator recalled that grant applications used to be written "in the heat of the night" by central staff, with the result that school staff had to implement programs they had not helped to design. Through the use of task forces that include school staff, this district has reportedly improved its grant-writing capability, program design, and program implementation--although the task forces consume more time and money than centralized proposal writers used to require. We were not able to judge whether this involvement of teachers went beyond tokenism, but district staff claimed that it did.

In the large districts that have reorganized, and in most of the small and moderate-sized districts, top administrators do not now perceive the power of special programs as any threat to the smooth running of the district. Some tension is probably inevitable in administrative relationships between the special and core instructional programs. Special program managers tend to see themselves as advocates for target populations; line managers often want to distribute resources more widely, and they object to the existence of special fiefdoms in the district administration (see Chapter IV for more on this district-level tension).

The differences in interests and outlooks within districts are evident in the early response to ECIA. Special program managers are generally nervous about regulatory shifts that may weaken their authority as advocates for special populations. The history of outside scrutiny, especially by auditors, adds to their nervousness. The case of one large district illustrates the predicament that program managers in most districts described. There, the superintendent and school board are on record as favoring the deregulation of outside funds. The superintendent has already encouraged school staff to use federal money as general aid--but the director of federal programs often cites the supplement-not-supplant requirement in order to keep the principals and teachers aware of the limits on the use of funds. With the recent changes in federal laws and regulations, this director commented,

> The board and the superintendent hear the talk of local control and want to make immediate changes. I get concerned, because I'm the one who'll be nailed if there's an audit exception at some future date.

This manager, along with his counterparts in other districts, fears that he will lose authority but still be held responsible for local decisions if regulations are loosened.

In summary, because the decisionmakers in any district or school usually represent different interests and hold different personal philosophies, the effect of federal intervention is rarely to foist some program feature on a uniformally recalcitrant local school system. As this section has illustrated, federal programs may alter the balance of power within a district by protecting the interests of special-needs pupils. However, the changes do not have to undermine the authority of district administrators or school staff in a major or lasting way.

Constituency Involvement and Power

Many federal laws contain provisions designed to increase the participation of target-group parents or constituencies in decisions about district and school programs. Their participation could happen through involvement (a) as individuals in decisions made about their children's instruction, (b) as members of advisory groups (e.g., the Title I Parent Advisory Councils) in program decisionmaking, (c) in active communication with the school, and (d) as political constituencies in school district politics, including matters of resource allocation. We discuss our findings regarding each area in turn.

Involvement of Individual Parents in Decisions About Their Children

Probably the most significant changes in parent participation in decisions about their children's instructional programs have resulted from the due process provisions of P.L.94-142. Most of the districts in our sample have experienced at least one parental veto of a plan drawn up for a handicapped student. In some cases, these vetoes are a sore point with district managers because parents have succeeded in gaining an expensive type of service for the child, such as a placement in a private school. Cost is not the only issue, though. For one thing, a single private placement, while expensive on a per-pupil basis, represents only a tiny fraction of a typical district's special education budget. Also, such placements draw heated objections from administrators in very wealthy districts that can easily afford the cost. Administrators are disturbed to find that their professional judgment can be successfully questioned by parents.

Although parental vetoes were often mentioned as a consequence of the due process requirements, in fact very few parents of handicapped students have objected to the services proposed by the districts we visited. More typically, the required meeting with parents furnishes an occasion for home-school communication that educators welcome (although scheduling meetings is time-consuming).

No substantial increase was reported in the involvement of individual parents of other target students in decisions about their children's programs.

Participation on Program Advisory Councils

Title I and the Bilingual Education Act prescribe the formation of advisory councils that include parents of the target children. Since 1978, Title I has required that such councils be set up at both the district and the school level. No district in our sample reported that school-level councils influenced any decisions with their advice. In states that mandate other parent groups at the school level, a few administrators commented that broadly constituted school councils have been a useful means of communicating with parents. Where the Title I school-level councils stand alone, however, their participation rates and general effectiveness are rated as negligible.

Nor do the district-level councils exercise much authority. We were told in most districts that few parents participate in the meetings of Title I district councils. The lack of participation is especially characteristic of the small and medium-sized districts, and administrators in some of these districts have all but given up on holding formal meetings because they have been so poorly attended. Instead, the parent councils in these districts attend workshops on parenting or on learning games they can play with their children.

Officials in several large districts said Title I parent councils sometimes try to play a bigger role in decisionmaking. "You have to keep reminding them they're 'advisory,'" one program manager said. In one large district, the Title I council has substantial power which administrators in that district are determined to reduce. It appears that past district administrators did not pay much attention to the Title I program, allowing it to become a vehicle for patronage dispensed by an advisory council memb (eventually elected to the school board). In recent years, a new administrative team has decided to change the situation and reduce the council to a purely advisory role. Another district twice had its Title I applications held up because the advisory council would not approve them, but the outcome of these controversies was to go ahead with the program as the district designed it.

In more typical districts, the parents who belong to advisory councils carry out a few other functions besides receiving instruction in workshops. The Title I council of one large district actively lobbied the Congress for Title I appropriations. An advisory group formed for the special education program in another large district took on a similar mission, writing letters to the state government in support of the state special education law. Administrators in a few districts sought the support of parents when the Title I budget diminished and some program components had to be dropped; the participation of parents in choosing which components to eliminate seemed to ease the political difficulty of making these decisions. None of the districts reported a very active bilingual parent council or one that has participated in program decisionmaking.

Communication With Parents

School and district staff tend to see most forms of parent involvement not as ways of bringing parents into active decisionmaking roles but rather as ways to inform parents about what is going on in the schools. Even the IEP process is seen primarily as a useful way of communicating with parents. A common practice is to draw up the IEP before meeting with parents, then to use the meeting to explain the purpose and content of the IEP. Advisory councils, too, are viewed as forums for communicating the district's plans to an audience of parents.

Some districts have used special program funds to employ target students' parents as aides or community liaison workers. (The roles of aides are discussed in Chapter IV.) In most of the districts where such efforts have existed, we were told that they have been generally useful in promoting communication between parents and schools--although no one gave specific examples of what this communication looks like or what good it has done. The home-school liaisons carry out some functions that are perceived as useful: recruiting parents for volunteer programs (as well as for the council meetings required by categorical programs); and, when they are bilingual, helping non-English-speaking parents with such tasks as registering their children for school.

When the subject of parent involvement came up, we often heard the lament that home-school communication has deteriorated since more mothers joined the workforce. Veteran teachers commented that they have far fewer parent conferences now than in the days when most children had a parent at home.

The parents of target children are often described as especially hard to draw into communication with the schools. Their English may be limited, or they may appear intimidated by the authority of professionals. Another reason for the relative forcefulness of some parents of handicapped children may be that their socioeconomic status makes them comfortable in dealing actively and assertively with the school system--a stance that is relatively uncommon among the parents of Title I or limited-English students.

Influence Over School District Policies

On the school district political scene, the only educational constituency that seems to have gained substantial power from federal laws is the parents of handicapped students. Special laws do seem to have enhanced the power of these parents. Their strength evidently rests less on their votes in school-board elections than on the legal mandate for their children's education, which makes them an active and vocal interest group.

Other constituency groups, however, have not gained a strong place in district politics from federal laws.* When asked what parents would be most likely to obtain more services for their children, assuming that an unrestricted block grant were given to a district and service mandates were removed, administrators in many districts mentioned the parents of gifted and talented children. Another group considered likely to win out is the affluent--the parents of children in non-Title I schools. (In one moderate-sized district, for example, the superintendent said these parents often ask him why their schools don't get more services.) Parents or advocates of the disadvantaged have gained a limited place in the power structure of some districts--such as one seat on the school board--but the disadvantaged are considered likely losers under an unrestricted block grant. A director of special education commented:

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* Groups advocating minority civil rights have also gained power from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related court decisions; however, unlike parents of the handicapped, these groups remain largely external to the school district power structure.

> If you cut Title I, there would not be as much community ruckus as cutting special education. We could beat Title I in a public fight.

Aside from the involvement of the parents of handicapped children previously noted, the stories of effective parent involvement that we heard had nothing to do with federal programs. In one large district, for example, the superintendent established broad-based citizen task forces to look at several issues related to the school system (e.g., the current state of desegregation several years after a court order). These task forces, which include representatives of local government and the business community as well as parents from different cultural and economic backgrounds, seem to be working quite effectively. They have symbolic value as an example of the city's pride in its schools, and the preliminary findings that we heard from task force members suggested that they were digging into the issues in a productive way.

To summarize, the only federal law that seems to have enhanced community authority significantly, P.L.94-142, contains due process requirements and a service mandate which give the school system an obligation to heed the wishes of parents. Otherwise, federal laws seem to have been weak levers on the balance of political power in school systems. There has been some consultation and communication with parents in federally mandated councils, but parents do not seem to have gained lasting entrée into district decisionmaking through these vehicles.

Summary

The following findings about local decisionmaking emerge from this study:

(1) Educators typically recognize and accept the key principles underlying federal laws and regulations. Although the implementation of particular requirements varies considerably, there is remarkable consistency in the way the underlying principles are perceived across districts.

(2) The specific rules that determine the details of program operation in the school tend to come from states and districts at least as often as from the federal level. Each level in the intergovernmental system appears to interpret rules from above more conservatively, in part as a result of the federal accountability structure.

(3) School and district staff see compliance with requirements as a necessary and acceptable price to pay for federal aid, because (a) they believe that compliance is part of the bargain they have struck with the federal government, (b) they recognize a potential for local abuse, (c) the rules help solve local problems, and (d) the rules relieve the burden of difficult allocation decisions.

(4) There is dissatisfaction with some types of requirements: those that clash with an individual's policy preferences, restrict the exercise of teacher judgment, have been imposed recently, cost a district a lot of money, or are ambiguously stated.

(5) Schools and districts respond to the requirements they dislike with limited noncompliance, some negotiation with higher authorities, and accommodation over time.

(6) It is simplistic and inaccurate to say that federal programs have eroded local discretion. The presence of special resources has expanded the occasions for exercising discretion. Moreover, districts contain varying interests and viewpoints, of which some (such as advocates for special needs groups) are actually strengthened by the requirements of federal laws.

(7) District staff, especially program managers, have gained power over schools as a result of federal resources and requirements--but principals have also gained a larger scope of decisionmaking power. Although special program offices were said to have acquired considerable power a few years ago, many superintendents have acted to redress this effect.

(8) Among parents of target groups, only the parents of handicapped students have gained much influence over decisions about individual students' programs or district resource allocation. Even among these parents, most are inactive in educational decisionmaking. Parent advisory groups rarely take part in school or district decisionmaking. School and district staff tend to see most forms of required parent involvement as ways to inform parents about what is going on in schools.

VI CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we examined the cumulative effects of a number of federal categorical programs and related civil rights mandates on schools and school districts. The federal laws share the broad purpose of improving the educational opportunities for target groups of children and youth, although they vary in their more specific aims and provisions. We were looking for effects in three areas: target students' access to services that are considered appropriate; organizational and administrative features of schools and school districts; and local decisionmaking. This chapter reviews our findings briefly, then draws general conclusions and policy interpretations from them.

We should mention here what we did not do in this study. We did not assess the implementation of each of the programs studied; instead, we looked for the broader effects attributable to the sum total of many programs and mandates operating over time. Nor did we look at the effects of programs and mandates on student achievement outcomes. Interviewees sometimes cited test scores as evidence of program benefits, but this was not a systematic focus of our inquiry. In the context of current interest in improving the quality of schools, readers might assume we addressed the question of whether the caliber of our nation's schools has improved. We did not. The concern in the past was that certain groups were deprived of educational opportunities; we studied the effects, intended and unintended, of laws designed to improve that situation.

Findings

Chapters III-V have presented our findings in some detail. Here, we summarize the highlights under the six areas of concern described in Chapter I:

- Instructional services for target students--Are the services judged appropriate? Are they reaching the intended targets?
- Fragmentation vs. coordination of instruction--Is there a problem? How has it been addressed?
- Effects on the regular classroom and core instructional program--Do the services provided for target students influence the regular classroom or detract from the resources available for other students?
- Systematic approaches to instructional management--Do school and district staff assess needs, plan programs for individual students, or evaluate results more systematically? How elaborate are the procedures they use? How useful?
- Administrative burden - Have the requirements and administrative details of special programs hindered the work of local professionals or detracted from instructional time?
- Decisionmaking--Has local discretion been reduced? Has power shifted within districts?

Our review of findings emphasizes general tendencies across sites. While numerous variations and exceptions occurred (and have been noted where especially important), the dominant pattern in most issue areas we studied was one of considerable consistency, despite the wide range of conditions across the study sample. The reader is referred to the preceding chapters for more detail on the exceptions to the general patterns we report below.

Instructional Services for Target Students

We found that students who are intended to benefit from federal programs and mandates generally do receive special services in some degree tailored to their individual needs. The services are most often provided by staff who are specifically trained to handle the target students' learning needs and who could not or would not have been hired without federal funds and targeting requirements.

With few exceptions, teachers and administrators said these services are more appropriate than the instruction the students would have received in the absence of any federal intervention. Where there were negative comments about the special services, they reflected individual teachers' or administrators' judgment that particular special staff were not competent; that program entry or exit requirements were inflexible; or that the design of the instruction was inappropriate (for example, bilingual education drew some philosophical criticism).

Students commonly spend time outside their regular classrooms in order to receive special instruction. According to some educational philosophies, this is undesirable on its face. However, many respondents pointed out to us that classroom instruction does not meet students' needs. Missing "regular reading" to go to a pull-out class often means missing little because the regular class is far beyond the target student's achievement level. Participation in the regular classroom all day long is generally thought more likely to confuse and frustrate a student with special needs than to convey an instructional experience.

Most of the people we interviewed insisted, and apparently believe, that their schools are providing supplementary instruction for target students, "over and above" the regular program. In a strictly logical sense, this is untrue. A student pulled out for special instruction always misses something, even if it is only recess. However, most classroom teachers told us that the target students are receiving something extra and worthwhile in their pull-out classes.

We also found that special services are targeted--that is, they served the students they are supposed to serve and are not spread around to all students. People in all districts and schools said that other students could benefit from special resources also, but they usually obey the requirements that defined target categories of students.

Instructional Fragmentation vs. Coordination

We looked for evidence that the instructional programs offered to target students are or are not fragmented--that is, whether learning may be impeded because students suffer interruptions of the school day (e.g., by attending pull-out classes) or are taught by different methods. In many districts and schools, we heard that this has been a major problem in the past. The great majority of these districts and schools have, however, taken steps to address the problem. They have limited interruptions of the classroom program (including local activities such as band practice) and have simplified school schedules so that the comings and goings for each classroom are minimized. Indeed, in their desire to reduce fragmentation they often limit the special instructional services which students may receive (even though they may be entitled to more).

Schools and districts also now address the problem of fragmentation by coordinating the content of instruction offered under different programs. Classroom teachers are often given the responsibility of orchestrating the special services, for example, by specifying what skills a particular child should work on each week. Specialist teachers are encouraged by their program directors to stay in close touch with classroom teachers. Partially as a result of these efforts, classroom teachers' sense of responsibility for target students seems generally undiminished by the presence of specialists.

At an organizational level, we studied the influence of federal policies on "administrative fragmentation," often asserted to contribute to problems of instructional coordination. We found that the presence of staff with different class loads and instructional approaches initially increased the potential for misunderstanding and conflict among school staff. However, over time these issues have been worked out in most cases. At the district level, federal policies have been partly responsible for administrative structures in which separate units or people oversee segments of the instructional program. Interdivision relationships are complicated by this fact, but the level of rivalry and friction is relatively low. We could detect little adverse impact of LEA organizational arrangements on school functioning. Once again, at both school and district levels, there is evidence across all types of sites that local efforts to combat problems of administrative fragmentation have reduced these problems to a manageable level.

These efforts have not been successful everywhere. In some schools, no one has taken much initiative to coordinate services. Turf jealousies at the district level has sometimes impeded coordination. Where they occur, schoolwide morale problems have made the initial frictions between special and core staff difficult to resolve. However, these instances of persisting fragmentation are exceptions to a more general rule: solving the problems associated with special services is largely a matter of local leadership, resolve, and time.

Effects on the Regular Classroom and the Core Instructional Program

We investigated the unintended effects of federal programs and mandates on the core instructional program of schools and districts: do nontarget students suffer interruption or impoverishment of their program, or is it enhanced? For the most part, we found few substantial effects of either sort. Although nontarget students may be distracted from their work by the comings and goings of classmates served in pull-out classes, teachers reported that the disruption is minimal once the scheduling routines have been worked out. Some classroom teachers lose instructional time due to matters related to special services (e.g., special education placement meetings), but this is not considered to be a major problem. A number of classroom teachers noted also that they gave more attention to nontarget students when the "difficult to teach" were out of the room. The presence of specialized staff and materials sometimes produced spillover benefits for nontarget students, but this seems minimal, due to widespread compliance with the federal targeting requirements.

There are hints, however, of more pervasive and longterm forms of beneficial spillover as well as more serious negative effects. In some sites new ideas and practices were first introduced through federal programs.

On the other hand, in districts where strong state enforcement of service mandates coincides with fiscal strains, we heard that the regular program budget has suffered. District officials in these states acknowledged that they are making some cutbacks in services for nontarget students, such as a small increase in class sizes. In these cases, federal and state mandates have forced tradeoffs among groups of students.

Systematic Approaches to Instructional Management

Many federal laws specify procedures for planning, needs assessment, and evaluation. These are intended to stimulate systematic thinking and accountability at the local level, with an ultimate result of more individually appropriate services for students. We found that the use of systematic procedures has indeed increased over time. Programs for individual students in all target groups were developed with the aid of formalized procedures (such as tests, assessments, and meetings).

The overall management of special services at the district level is similarly marked by systematic planning, program evaluations, and needs assessments. Although not all districts implement these procedures with equal zeal, all types of districts we visited use them to some degree. While we could not judge for ourselves whether students benefited from this state of affairs, many school and district staff (especially the managers of special programs) asserted that they do.

Respondents disagreed about the educational merit of systematic approaches or their usefulness in local program management. Proponents noted that systematic assessment and placement procedures got the "right" students into special services. Critics cited logistical problems (e.g., delays in handling referral for special services) as evidence. Nonetheless, there seems to be widespread feeling that systematic procedures of some sort represent good professional practice--a trend in the way people think about education which the federal role seems to have reinforced.

It seems unlikely that instructional management at either the student or district level would be approached as systematically in the absence of the federal role. People in schools and districts view many of these systematic procedures as devices for accountability to distant authorities in Washington and state capitals. Most of them accept the need for such accountability as a condition of receiving outside funds.

Administrative Burden

Closely related to the topic of systematic procedures is that of administrative burden--paperwork, extra meetings, and other administrative chores. We gave special attention to chores that took up the time of key core program staff (principals, classroom teachers, directors of curriculum). Although it is clear that special services have generated a great deal of administrative detail and some sense of burden, we found fewer complaints than we expected.

The people who deal with the administrative detail tend to be those whose salaries are paid out of special program funds, especially program managers in the district office and teaching specialists or aides in the school. In all but the smallest districts such people handle most of the administrative chores related to federal and state programs, thus minimizing the burden on classroom teachers and principals. Few core staff we interviewed said they resent the administrative burden related to special programs, feeling instead that the outside funds are adequate to cover the work. The instances of serious burden seem restricted to particular roles and situations: locally paid counselors who take on special education management unwillingly; schools in which the principal has no "extra pair of hands" to help with the administrative detail; hard-pressed districts facing major, nonroutine challenges attributable to federal policies (e.g., desegregation).

We also found that most of the burden associated with any particular law seem to diminish drastically after the first year or two of the law's implementation. For example, teachers and administrators can remember their early struggles with IEPs for the handicapped, but in only a few sites do they still find these plans burdensome. Familiarity has made the requirements seem less formidable, and district staff have routinized and streamlined the work involved.

Local Decisionmaking

Despite the conventional wisdom that categorical programs and mandates tie the hands of local decisionmakers, we found a more complicated picture. It does not make sense to look at effects on something called local discretion because school districts contain varying interests and viewpoints--some of which are strengthened by federal requirements.

Local staff who take the role of advocate for target students have gained local power, often because service mandates and civil rights laws give them legal backing, and because their detailed knowledge of federal requirements strengthens their hand in local policy debates. District staff members have, in general, gained power over what goes on in schools because they have authority to oversee compliance with outside requirements. However, principals' discretion has increased, too, because their school programs have become more complicated; outside resources and special services increase the number of matters on which a principal can make decisions. In a similar way, the occasions for educators at all levels of the system to exercise discretion have multiplied as the complexity of the instructional program has grown.

Few, if any, community members who speak for target students have gained a foothold in district or school decisionmaking. Parents of handicapped students have leverage because of the service mandate and due process requirements, and some of them use this leverage very effectively. Advisory councils, however, have very little access to decisionmaking.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Across these findings, three general conclusions emerge that have important implications for federal policy:

- Collectively, federal and state policies for special populations have substantially improved and expanded the array of educational services for the intended target students.
- These policies have increased the structural complexity of schools and districts, which appears to represent a necessary consequence of providing targeted services.
- Over time, local problem solving, federal and state policy adjustments, and gradual local accommodation have generally reduced to a manageable level the costs associated with special services.

Each of these reflects a major cumulative effect of federal policy. We discuss the reasons for these effects, including state and local actions and general professional trends as well as federal actions. Finally, we point out why the effects are important to policymakers.

Change in the Array of Local Educational Services

Federal programs and mandates for target students have been translated into educational services that are, by and large, perceived to be appropriate and targeted on the "right" students. In all types of districts and schools, educators told us that federal resources have permitted them to offer more and better services to target students. They reported that federal requirements have increased the concentration of resources on special-needs students and have helped reduce discrimination against such students. Moreover, the presence of multiple federal and state programs has increased the total pool of resources to work with. While these changes have not been equally extensive in every district and school, the direction of the changes is consistent across our sample.

Together, the federal and state initiatives for special populations present local educators with an impressive accumulation of options that apply to large numbers of students. In districts heavily impacted by poverty and diverse needs, the expansion in educational services affects most students; in other districts varying proportions benefit. In short, the effects we describe add up to a considerable expansion of instructional capabilities at the local level.

Many federal and state actions work together to bring about the change discussed here. Although we tried to distinguish the effects of specific program provisions, this effort was not fruitful. There do not seem to be particular federal requirements that consistently achieve their aims better than others. Instead, the important local effects of federal policy appear to stem from the combination of many federal and state policy tools, including funds, goal statements, program requirements, and sanctions. These tools operate as follows:

- The funds available under categorical programs pay for a large share of the special staff and materials that serve target students. Funds also provide federal leverage for a more subtle reason. Local administrators and teachers, feeling that they have made a bargain with the federal government, comply with rules because compliance is what Washington expects in exchange for its money.
- Federal statements of purpose have a profound effect on schools and districts. The mere existence of a federal law draws attention to an area of educational need and helps to mobilize the local supporters of the law's purpose, notably the local advocates for target groups.
- Federal requirements communicate what types of local practices are or are not acceptable. The specific practices developed to comply with requirements vary among states and districts because they reflect varying interpretations developed by administrators at those levels. However, we found ample evidence that most districts and schools would spread their resources more thinly, with more resources going to "average" and gifted students, if it were not for the prohibitions conveyed by the federal requirements.

- The existence of sanctions strongly reinforces the effects of the other policy tools. The prospect of a visit from auditors, let alone an audit exception, exerts powerful leverage on local behavior.

Some readers may be surprised by the magnitude and consistency of the effects of federal policy found in this study. A decade or so of research on program implementation has created skepticism about whether federal programs can possibly have their intended effects at the local level. We think there are three explanations for this apparent discrepancy between our findings and the implementation literature--the nature of the questions we set out to answer, the nature of the programs we studied, and the time frame for research.

Our research questions focused on broad effects, with relatively little attention to the details of local practice in each program. Had we looked at the way each program provision was carried out, as implementation studies of single programs have done, we would have found far more variability at the state, district, and school levels. We certainly would have found variability in the answers to questions like, "How is the Title I target population defined?" or "What does an IEP look like?" However, the much broader changes attributable to federal programs, such as the existence of increased specialized instruction for target students, were consistent across our sample.

The second reason for the strong and consistent effects we found has to do with the programs studied. Some important implementation studies have dealt with programs that accorded a great deal of discretion to local participants. The "Change Agent" study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), often cited as evidence that federal programs have weak and variable local effects, dealt with programs that involved very limited federal rules and monitoring. The programs and mandates considered in our study, however, have been designed and administered in a deliberate effort to bring about local compliance.

Third, unlike much of the implementation research, this study dealt with programs that are no longer new. The policies on which we focused had all been in place for a number of years (18 in the case of Title I) by the time of our field visits. Over time, local variations have probably diminished.

Our conclusion for policymakers is that federal actions can, indeed, make a substantial difference in local educational practice and can accomplish their intended purposes. Despite the vagaries of state and local handling of specific program provisions, the overall effects of federal involvement in the education of target students have been relatively clear and consistent. A sustained federal presence--comprising funds, goal statements, requirements, and sanctions, and enlisting state and local administrators as participants in the effort--turns out to have more of an effect on school programs than many people would think.

Structural Complexity in Local Systems

Our second broad conclusion is that federal policies have increased the structural complexity of schools and districts, which have developed more administrative apparatus to handle the staff, rules, and procedures that come with special programs. These changes take somewhat different forms at the school and the district level, but at both levels the increased complexity appears to represent a necessary local consequence of providing targeted services.

Schools now house more differentiated and specialized staff, a wider array of materials, and more special settings in which students receive individual or small-group services. Instructional programs for individual students have more separate components. The increase in program planning for individual students means that teachers' and aides' activities are more formally structured and documented.

At the district level, the increases in complexity stem largely from the need to achieve and demonstrate compliance with multiple sets of requirements. Rules from the federal and state levels must be attended to, and they must be turned into local procedural guidelines. District staff have to monitor practices in the schools to make sure the guidelines are understood and followed. They must follow a whole raft of procedures to document program planning and funds allocation--applications, reports, special financial accounting systems, record keeping, needs assessments, evaluation, and so on. Other procedural requirements have been set up to make the district accountable to local audiences, including the parents of handicapped students and the advisory councils that represent other target groups.

The structural complexity at the school and district reflects a fundamental trade-off. On the one hand, target students gain, educators get help with their most difficult teaching problems, and the responsiveness of the system as a whole increases. On the other hand, students' instructional programs lose some things, and an element of inefficiency is introduced into the system.

For students, the school-level changes mean that they can receive tailored services and individual attention from adults, often from specialists. Needs assessment and program planning result in a good match between student needs and program services. However, the students who participate in special services inevitably miss something in the core instructional program. They may lose some stability in instruction, and they are likely to experience the strain of following a complicated daily routine.

For the adults in the school, there are more ways to handle difficult learning (and disciplinary) problems, more occasions to communicate with parents, and more people to turn to for advice or support. Nonetheless, the time necessary to coordinate the components of the instructional program may be time taken away from working with students (this is more true of specialists than classroom teachers). Furthermore, the presence of specialists raises issues of staff relations that take time to resolve.

For the staff at the district office, the new resources and associated requirements give them leverage over problems they were formerly unable to solve as well. But they pay a price in terms of staff time and the intricacy of administering an instructional program subdivided into many parts. The growth in numbers of administrative staff makes decisionmaking more cumbersome. Their responsiveness to the school may also suffer somewhat in the process.

The costs associated with all the school and district administrative procedures are clearly substantial, although impossible to tally precisely. When considered in isolation, these costs are an easy target for complaints and calls for reform. But the costs are difficult to eliminate. Efforts to reduce them may diminish the associated benefits as well.

Administrative inefficiency is probably an inevitable result of the variety of services offered and the increase in the districts' accountability. As the student population includes more and more formerly unserved groups, increases in the variety of instruction and associated complications are unavoidable. And as local, state, and federal audiences require the presence of targeted services for special-needs students, some explicit rules and procedures (though not necessarily those now in place) are necessary. District officials recognize not only that the rules and procedures generate more work but also protect them by defining clearly what is expected of them and the schools.

When policymakers consider the disadvantages of the increased complexity in schools and districts, they should remember the problems that the complex arrangements were set up to solve. Without specialized, differentiated instructional services in schools, target students might languish in inappropriate "regular" instruction. Without formal mechanisms for coordinating these programs, fragmentation could predominate in the schools. And without rules and procedures for accountability, there would be no assurance that schools and districts were adequately attending to target students.

Settling in Over Time

Across most of the issue areas we investigated, we heard that matters have improved over time. Services for target students have become more appropriate; instructional fragmentation has been reduced; administrative burdens are being handled more efficiently; program managers have been stopped from building empires. Although problem-solving efforts have not been uniformly vigorous or successful across sites, we found at least some reported trend towards improvement in every site. It seemed attributable to a combination of factors, including active local responses to the problems associated with federal policies, policy adjustments at the federal and state levels, and gradual familiarization with federal initiatives.

People in most schools and school districts have responded actively to the problems that have accompanied categorical programs and mandates, taking steps to combat these problems. The problem solving includes district policies (e.g., limiting the number of pull-outs for each student), school policies (e.g., rescheduling to facilitate staff interaction), and individual actions (e.g., conversations between teachers who share students). Local educators also respond to local problems by complaining about them to federal and state authorities, in hopes of changing the policies they hold responsible for the problems. A more passive resistance also takes place as problematic requirements are reinterpreted and streamlined.

In response to complaints and perceived deficiencies in the programs, federal and state governments have made adjustments in policies. For example, the 1978 amendments to Title I allowed special staff to share in bus duty, cafeteria duty, and the like, thus easing the tension among staff in many schools. Recent changes in several states' special education laws were credited in various sites with alleviating some difficulties.

The sustained presence of federal programs and mandates has meant that, apart from any efforts to mitigate problems, people have become used to the laws, have come to understand them better or fear them less, or have simply forgotten what a school was like without targeted instruction. (Many younger staff members have never known it any other way.) Simultaneously, the specialized staff appear to have become more experienced, less threatening, and probably more useful to their schools. Finally, perhaps through repetition alone, the key principles underlying program rules seem to have sunk in and become part of local ways of doing things.

Another factor contributing to the generally positive perception of local cumulative effects may have been the shift in the terms of the policy debate in Washington. Many of our respondents, aware that major reductions in the federal role in education were being considered, made a point of telling us that they would hate to see such reductions take place. We do not think these comments are best understood as simple nostalgia for a federal role that seemed to be disappearing--in short, a "bias" distorting the "true" picture. Aware of the new policy debate, people who thought the local burdens of the federal role outweighed the benefits would have wanted to express that opinion to us so that we would pass it along to policymakers. Yet we heard very few such comments, even from the people with no vested interest in the special programs (classroom teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members). Instead, most people seemed to have weighed the pros and cons of the federal programs and to have concluded that the benefits warranted their speaking up in favor of the programs.

Still, the tendency for programs to settle in over time suggests one limitation of relying on local perceptions in this kind of research. Just as the perception of a very new program will probably exaggerate its defects, the perception of a long-standing program or set of programs may well exaggerate its benefits. Another limitation on local perceptions has to do with frame of reference. While our respondents could compare special programs with regular classroom instruction, drawing on their knowledge of the way these services work now, they had trouble imagining alternative service arrangements. For example, they were unsure of what services might be provided with the same level of funds but different federal regulations (since many state, district, and school decisions would shape these services).

There is an important countervailing trend to the generally positive picture of changes over time. In the sites where strong service mandates are combined with strained resources, the perception of the burdensome aspects of federal policy seems to be growing. Dwindling funds at the local, state, and federal levels create problems that are extremely hard to solve. A few of our sites have begun to make small cuts in the services offered to nontarget students. When the overall pie is shrinking and target students are protected by service mandates, such cuts are inevitable. Fiscal trends at all levels of government suggest that this problem will become more widespread and severe in the near future, and that it warrants attention from policymakers.

The fact that programs tend to settle in more comfortably over time, barring new financial problems, should not be taken as an admonition to policy makers to leave the current federal role unchanged. Changes are obviously necessary as national problems and needs shift. However, knowing how local perceptions change over time can help in setting expectations for the effects of new initiatives. The short-term result of almost any policy change will be local resistance, confusion, and poorly organized services. Over a few years, things work better, and the true merits of a policy initiative can be assessed more realistically. (In the longer term, it may be that any initiative comes to be viewed as indispensable at the local level.)

Finally, policy makers should recognize and encourage the local problem solving and intergovernmental negotiation that develop around programs. The flexibility allowed for local decisionmaking in designing, managing, and delivering services is what accounts in large part for the quality of the educational services provided under federal programs and mandates.

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